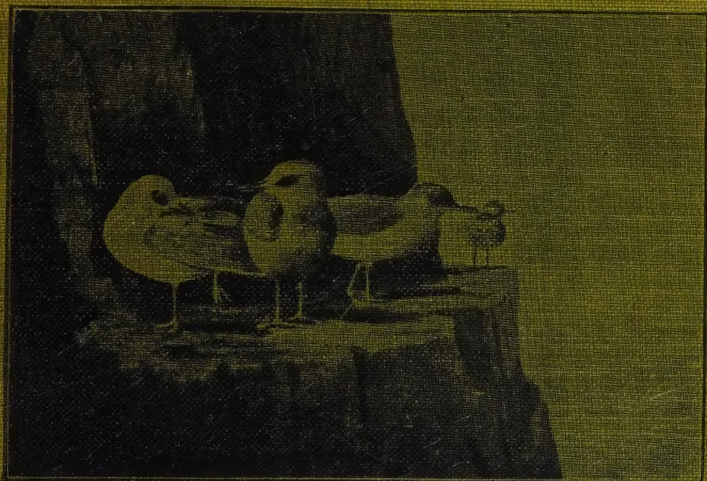


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W. Percival Westell



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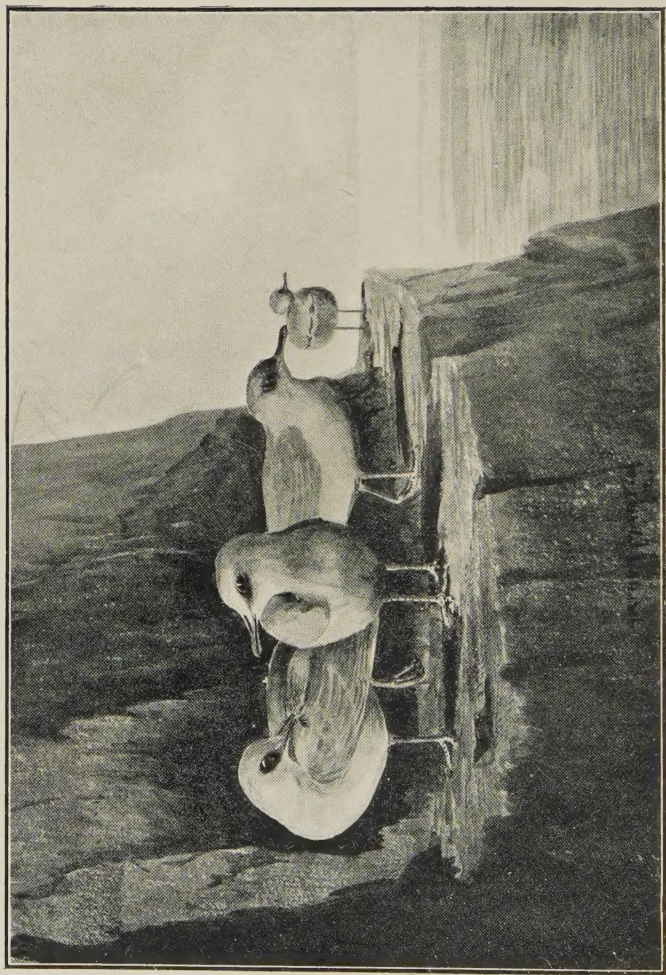
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KITTIWAKE GULLS ($\frac{1}{3}$ Natural Size).

BRITISH BIRD LIFE

BEING POPULAR SKETCHES OF EVERY
SPECIES OF BIRD NOW REGULARLY
NESTING IN THE BRITISH ISLES

BY

W. PERCIVAL WESTELL

M.B.O.U., F.R.H.S., etc.

Author of

"A Year with Nature," "The Early Life of the Young Cuckoo,"

"A Handbook of British Breeding Birds,"

"Country Rambles," etc.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY THE

RIGHT HON. SIR HERBERT MAXWELL, BART., M.P.

F.R.S., LL.D.



WITH SIXTY ILLUSTRATIONS

from Original Drawings by ARTHUR MARTIN and Photographs taken
direct from Nature.

LONDON

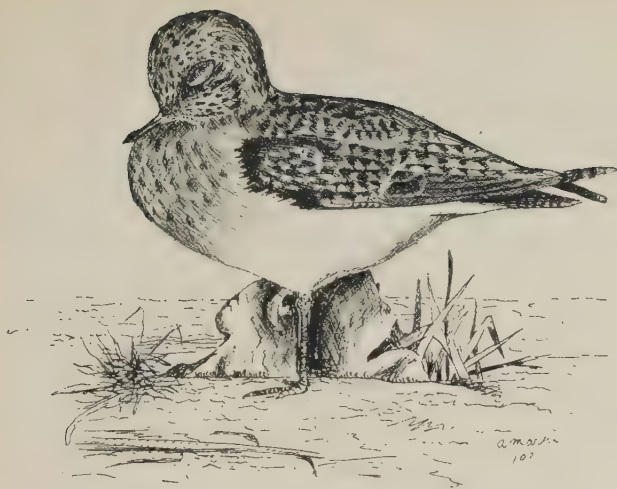
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PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1905

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TO
MY WIFE
I AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATE
THIS BOOK.



PREFACE

WORKS on *so-called* British Birds are many, but books solely devoted to those species which regularly nest in our country are very few. This being so, it seems to me that there is need for a work *entirely devoted to those species which nest amongst us year by year*, and more particularly a volume written in a popular manner so that it may prove useful and interesting to the less-informed observer or lover of our wild birds.

Beyond this, my endeavour has been to set out the good which birds do and the protection and preservation they need ; to show what a loss the country-side would sustain without their joyous presence and voice ; their beautifully-woven homesteads and delicately-painted eggs ; their winning ways and devotion to their young, and generally to give the result of many years' study among wild birds in their native haunts.

Preface

The day for the wanton shooting of birds is now fast passing away ; in the place of the gun, trap and catapult, one sees substituted on many sides the field-glass, note-book and camera, and it has been my aim in these bird sketches to set forth the delights of stalking with a bloodless intention, to observe them as animate beings, and to learn something of their interesting lives and habits.

As a scientific contribution to the knowledge of the birds of our country my work may not be of any importance ; on the other hand, if its publication results in inculcating a love for birds amongst once indifferent observers, my task will not have been in vain.

As regards the species included, I may perhaps be criticised for not giving a place to such species as the Canada Goose, Little Owl, Golden Oriole, Hoopoe, St Kilda and Fire-crested Wrens, and a few other species which *occasionally* nest in the British Isles or which regularly nest in a semi-domestic state. Howbeit, my list of 177 species has been checked and passed by four of the most eminent British Ornithologists, and I do not think it will be found to be far wrong.

Many species of birds need our immediate and constant protection, and it is pleasing to record that several Societies are now doing effective work in the way of bird prosecutions, employing watchers during the breeding season, distributing bird literature, and offering prizes for essays, etc., upon wild birds. Beyond this, it is generally admitted that Nature study is now receiving very prominent attention in our system of education, and that a more intelligent interest is taken nowadays in British bird life than ever previously existed.

I have several acknowledgments to make—To Mr C. L. Hett for the great use as a work of reference as

Preface

regards the local names and notes of birds included in his *Dictionary of Bird Notes*, and *A' Glossary of Popular Local and Old-Fashioned Names of British Birds*; to Mr W. H. Hudson's *British Birds*; and to Mr A. W. Hext Harvey, Mr C. L. Hett, Mr H. E. Forrest, Dr J. E. H. Kelso, Mr A. E. Frost, the Rev. H. Holroyd Mills and others for allowing me to reproduce many of their excellent photographs, all taken direct from Nature; to Mr Arthur Martin for his carefully-executed drawings; and to Mr W. O. D. Jones for able assistance in reading the proofs.

I also wish to express my indebtedness to the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury, the Right Hon. the Earl of Clarendon, and Graham Fish, Esq., for permission to carry out my studies on their respective estates; and to the Right Hon. Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart., for his kind and appreciative Introduction

W. PERCIYAL WESTELL.

ST ALBANS, HERTS,
December 1904.

AN INTRODUCTION

BY

THE RIGHT HON. SIR HERBERT MAXWELL, BART, M.P.
F.R.S., LL.D.

THE intelligent and sympathetic interest in our feathered fellow-creatures which has been awakened of late years has resulted already in an abundant literature, but I gladly respond to the invitation to bid welcome to a fresh volume. Birds are the most conspicuous of all the wild animals in our land, and arrest the attention of children more surely than do any other creatures. Many a boy who has started with birds, has been led on to the serious study of other forms of life; the careers of some of the most famous naturalists began in this way. Yet in this land of mighty cities, wherein so much of the greenwood and open country has been engulfed, there grow up tens of thousands of children who have no early acquaintance with country life. Only a few days ago I read in a provincial paper a letter from a school-teacher, pathetically describing the ignorance of some of his scholars of the commonest wild animals. One boy was better informed than many of his fellows in the class; he had once seen a Lark; but it was in a cage hanging outside a public-house! A book like this of Mr Percival Westell's seems to me just the one which may be of lasting profit and pleasure to children reared in great towns. It does not deter them by scientific terminology or puzzle their busy heads with problems of classification; it sets before them in simple language a few of the main facts in the

Introduction

life-history of each species. And although many country-bred children may, and do ascertain these facts by what is passing under their eyes day by day, the truth is, that many others grow up with no knowledge of them at all. Take at random any dozen of your country neighbours you like, the chances are that not one of them is able to name at sight fifty out of the four hundred or so species of birds that may be claimed as British. Mr Westell's short chapters are just the kind of reading that will stimulate closer attention and put the young observer in possession of a useful quantum of ready-made knowledge.

But, it may be asked, what is the use of such knowledge? what advantage is it to a lad who has his living to work out in the shop or counting-house, the factory or the mine, the railway service or the post-office, to know that a Robin eats worms and insects, while the staple food of a Chaffinch is hard seeds? that a Mallard feeds on the surface of the water, while a Pochard must dive for its daily bread?

My answer is that what distinguishes man above all other living creatures is his superior intelligence. It is not desirable that every clerk, railway porter or factory hand should be an ornithologist; but every human being of every station and calling is the better of understanding something of matters outside his daily routine. Knowledge is not only power, it is pleasure; and many a dreary life has been brightened—many a sore heart soothed—many an anxious mind relieved—by the habit of watching and inquiring into the operations of Nature. It needs but a slight acquaintance with botany to turn the bleak hillside into a play-ground; the rudiments of geology confer an interest on every railway cutting and house foundation: no copse so lonely—no seashore so waste—no country lane so rough—as not to afford pastime to him whose interest has been aroused in birds. A little knowledge—we are

Introduction

warned that it is a dangerous thing ; but we have learnt, many of us, that it is also the source of much innocent pleasure.

Mr Westell has succeeded in showing that there is a great deal of amusement, even of an exciting kind, in studying the habits of birds, without killing them. Perhaps he goes further than I can follow him in his principle of *laissez-faire*. He would have the exuberance of Sparrows checked by means of their natural enemy, the Sparrow Hawk ; and that might be well enough, if the Sparrow Hawk flew only at Sparrows. But he is just as likely to strike at a Goldfinch, which is now a relatively rare bird with us, or at a Blackcap, which never wronged "beast or body," as we say in Scotland. In our densely-populated country it is necessary to keep some prolific and mischievous species within bounds ; and this we must undertake for ourselves. Take, for example, the lordly Heron. There is no greater ornament to a landscape, none that more surely awakens memories of the ancient days of chivalry. Yet a few years ago, when a new heronry was established upon a trout stream on my property, I had to make the choice between the total depopulation of the stream and the eviction of the Herons. I decreed the latter—not without compunction—for I was unwilling to leave the spangled trout without a friend.

Expediency and necessity vary with locality. It fell to my lot to conduct through the House of Commons certain Bills amending and extending the original measures passed at the instance of that excellent naturalist, Sir John Lubbock, now Lord Avebury. Many members pressed me to frame these Bills so that they should apply uniformly throughout the United Kingdom. I declined to do so ; adhering to the principle that local authorities should regulate the application of the Acts according to the varying requirements of different districts. I submit that

Introduction

time has proved the prudence of this course. The lists of protected species are revised periodically, so that those species which have multiplied to the detriment of other animals, or of human interests, may be withdrawn from the schedule. Thus in Sutherland, Golden Eagles increased so rapidly under protection as to become a serious evil to lambs; wherefore they have been struck off the list of protected species. The same has been done in Wigtownshire, at my own instance, in regard to Peregrine Falcons and the Common Gull. We do not wish the air to be darkened by these birds of ravine. The object of the Acts was to afford reasonable means of protection to all species, and to arrest the approaching extermination of some. That ardent lover of birds and excellent ornithologist, the late Lord Lilford, had the satisfaction, ere he died, of noting the beneficial results of statutory protection in the increase of such desirable creatures as the Mallard, Pochard, Great-crested Grebe and Shoveler Duck. But he was the last to deny that, in order to carry out the principle of "Live and let live," some check must be maintained upon the undue increase of birds of prey. Great Britain, despite its dense human population, contains a larger bird population than any country in Europe in proportion to its area. It offers, therefore, a perennial attraction as a hunting ground for birds of prey from other lands, and firm measures of police are necessary to prevent these becoming too numerous. It is matter for satisfaction that such measures are becoming more discriminating than they have been heretofore.

HERBERT MAXWELL.

MONREITH, *December* 1904.



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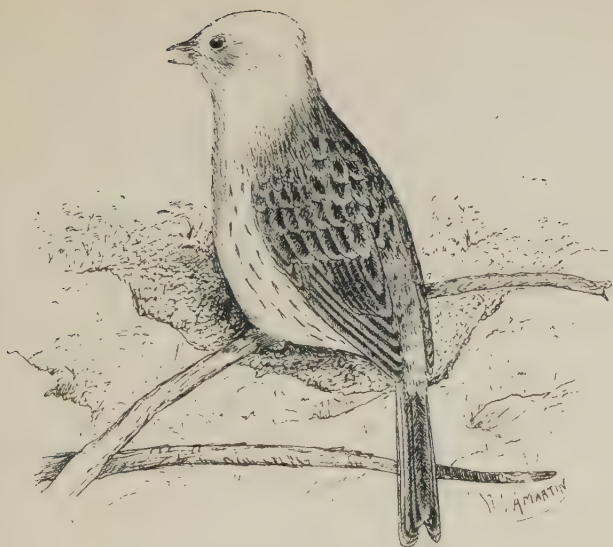
A LIST OF SUMMER MIGRANTS TO THE BRITISH ISLES

Ranged somewhat in the order in which they appear.

1. Spotted Crake. March.
2. Ring Ouzel. End of March or beginning of April.
3. Wheatear. End of March.
4. Stone Curlew. March, April, and early in May. Some of these birds are said to remain with us all the year round.
5. Chiff Chaff. End of March.
6. Yellow Wagtail. End of March or early in April.
7. Sand Martin. Early in April, generally before the Swallow or House Martin.
8. Swallow. Middle of April.
9. House Martin. About April 20th, usually a little later than the Swallow.
10. Redstart. Beginning to middle of April.
11. Grasshopper Warbler. Middle of April.
12. Whinchat. From middle to end of April, sometimes as late as May.

Summer Visitors

13. Blackcap. Middle of April.
14. Nightingale. Middle of April; males arrive about ten days before the females.
15. Hobby Falcon. Appears in April.
16. Wryneck. First or second week in April, generally a few days before the Cuckoo, hence it is called the Cuckoo's Mate or Messenger.
17. Cuckoo. "In April come he will."
18. Tree Pipit. About middle of April.
19. Common Sandpiper. About middle of April.
20. Lesser Whitethroat. About middle of April, sometimes earlier.
21. Greater Whitethroat. About middle to end of April.
22. Willow Warbler. Second week in April, although it is often recorded as early as March.
23. Kentish Plover. April or May.
24. Corncrake. Last week in April.
25. Red-backed Shrike. End of April, beginning of May.
26. Sedge Warbler. Latter part of April.
27. Garden Warbler. End of April or early in May.
28. Reed Warbler. End of April or early in May.
29. Wood Warbler. End of April or early in May.
30. Turtle Dove. Latter part of April.
31. Quail. During May.
32. Swift. Early in May. One of the latest to arrive, and the earliest to depart.
33. Spotted Flycatcher. 7th to 20th of May.
34. Pied Flycatcher. May.
35. Nightjar. About the middle to end of May.
36. Marsh Warbler. About the middle of May.



WHERE OUR SUMMER MIGRANTS SPEND THE WINTER

1. Spotted Crane, Africa and India.
2. Ring Ouzel, Northern and Central Africa and Asia Minor.
3. Wheatear, Western and Northern Africa to Persia and Northern India.
4. Stone Curlew, Temperate Europe, Northern Africa and South-Western Asia.
5. Chiff Chaff, Shores of the Mediterranean.
6. Yellow Wagtail, Africa.
7. Sand Martin, India and Africa.
8. Swallow, Ethiopia and India.
9. House Martin, South of Abyssinia.
10. Redstart, Northern Africa.
11. Grasshopper Warbler, Northern Africa and Southern Europe.
12. Whinchat, Northern Africa.
13. Blackcap, Northern Africa and Southern Europe.
14. Nightingale, Africa.

Where Migrants spend Winter

15. Hobby Falcon, Africa and India.
16. Wryneck, China and Northern Africa.
17. Cuckoo, Central Africa and Southern India.
18. Tree Pipit, Africa, Persia and India.
19. Common Sandpiper, Africa.
20. Lesser Whitethroat, Africa generally.
21. Greater Whitethroat, Southern Africa.
22. Willow Warbler, Africa and Persia.
23. Kentish Plover, Africa, India and Southern China.
24. Corncrake, Algeria, Egypt, Asia Minor and Palestine.
25. Red-backed Shrike, Africa.
26. Sedge Warbler, Northern Africa and Asia Minor.
27. Garden Warbler, Africa.
28. Reed Warbler, Africa.
29. Wood Warbler, Africa.
30. Turtle Dove, Northern Africa, Egypt and Nubia.
31. Quail, Egypt and Northern Africa.
32. Swift, Africa.
33. Spotted Flycatcher, Africa.
34. Pied Flycatcher, Africa.
35. Nightjar, India and Africa.
36. Marsh Warbler, Africa.



ORDERS TO WHICH THE 177 BIRDS DEALT WITH BELONG

ORDER PASSERES.

Mistle Thrush (<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>).	Redbreast (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>).
Song Thrush (<i>Turdus musicus</i>).	Nightingale (<i>Daulias luscinia</i>).
Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>).	Greater Whitethroat (<i>Sylvia cinerea</i>).
Ring Ouzel (<i>Turdus torquatus</i>).	Lesser Whitethroat (<i>Sylvia curruca</i>).
Wheatear (<i>Saxicola oenanthe</i>).	Blackcap (<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>).
Whinchat (<i>Pratincola rubetra</i>).	Garden Warbler (<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>).
Stonechat (<i>Pratincola rubicola</i>).	Dartford Warbler (<i>Melizophilus undatus</i>).
Redstart (<i>Ruticilla phœnicurus</i>).	Golden-crested Wren (<i>Regulus cristatus</i>).

Orders to which Birds belong

Chiff Chaff
(*Phylloscopus rufus*).

Willow Warbler
(*Phylloscopus trochilus*).

Wood Warbler
(*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*).

Reed Warbler
(*Acrocephalus streperus*).

Marsh Warbler
(*Acrocephalus palustris*).

Sedge Warbler
(*Acrocephalus phragmitis*).

Grasshopper Warbler
(*Locustella naevia*).

Hedge Sparrow
(*Accentor modularis*).

Dipper
(*Cinclus aquaticus*).

Bearded Titmouse
(*Panurus biamicus*).

Long-tailed Titmouse
(*Acredula caudata*).

Great Titmouse
(*Parus major*).

Coal Titmouse
(*Parus britannicus*).

Marsh Titmouse
(*Parus palustris*).

Blue Titmouse
(*Parus caeruleus*).

Crested Titmouse
(*Parus cristatus*).

Nuthatch
(*Sitta cæsia*).

Common Wren
(*Troglodytes parvulus*).

Pied Wagtail
(*Motacilla lugubris*).

Grey Wagtail
(*Motacilla melanope*).

Yellow Wagtail
(*Motacilla rayii*).

Meadow Pipit
(*Anthus pratensis*).

Tree Pipit
(*Anthus trivialis*).

Rock Pipit
(*Anthus obscurus*).

Red-backed Shrike
(*Lanius collurio*).

Spotted Flycatcher
(*Muscicapa grisola*).

Pied Flycatcher
(*Muscicapa atricapilla*).

Swallow
(*Hirundo rustica*).

House Martin
(*Chelidon urbana*).

Sand Martin
(*Cotile riparia*).

Tree Creeper
(*Certhia familiaris*).

Goldfinch
(*Carduelis elegans*).

Siskin
(*Chrysometris spinus*).

Greenfinch
(*Ligurinus chloris*).

Orders to which Birds belong

Hawfinch
(*Coccothraustes vulgaris*).

House Sparrow
(*Passer domesticus*).

Tree Sparrow
(*Passer montanus*).

Chaffinch
(*Fringilla cælebs*).

Linnet
(*Linota cannabina*).

Lesser Redpoll
(*Linota rufescens*).

Twite
(*Linota flavirostris*).

Bullfinch
(*Pyrrhula europæa*).

Crossbill
(*Loxia curvirostra*).

Corn Bunting
(*Emberiza miliaria*).

Yellow Bunting
(*Emberiza citrinella*).

Cirl Bunting
(*Emberiza cirlus*).

Reed Bunting
(*Emberiza schæniclus*).

Snow Bunting
(*Plectrophanes nivalis*).

Starling
(*Sturnus vulgaris*).

Chough
(*Pyrrhocorax graculus*).

Jay
(*Garrulus glandarius*).

Magpie
(*Pica rustica*).

Jackdaw
(*Corvus monedula*).

Carriion Crow
(*Corvus corone*).

Hooded Crow
(*Corvus cornix*).

Rook
(*Corvus frugilegus*).

Raven
(*Corvus corax*).

Skylark
(*Alauda arvensis*).

Woodlark
(*Alauda arborea*).

ORDER PICARIÆ.

Swift
(*Cypselus apus*).

Nightjar
(*Caprimulgus europæus*).

Great Spotted Woodpecker
(*Dendrocopus major*).

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
(*Dendrocopus minor*).

Green Woodpecker
(*Gecinus viridis*).

Wryneck
(*Iynx torquilla*).

Kingfisher
(*Alcedo ispidu*).

Cuckoo
(*Cuculus canorus*).

Orders to which Birds belong

ORDER STRIGES.

Barn Owl (<i>Strix flammea</i>).	Short-eared Owl (<i>Asio brachyotus</i>).
Long-eared Owl (<i>Asio otus</i>).	Tawny Owl (<i>Syrnium aluco</i>).

ORDER ACCIPITRES.

Marsh Harrier (<i>Circus æruginosus</i>).	Kite (<i>Milvus ictinus</i>).
Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>).	Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>).
Montagu's Harrier (<i>Circus cineraceus</i>).	Hobby Falcon (<i>Falco subbuteo</i>).
Common Buzzard (<i>Buteo vulgaris</i>).	Merlin (<i>Falco æsalon</i>).
Golden Eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaëtus</i>).	Kestrel (<i>Tinnunculus alaudarius</i>).
White-tailed Eagle (<i>Haliaëtus albicilla</i>).	Osprey (<i>Pandion haliaëtus</i>).
Sparrow Hawk (<i>Accipiter nisus</i>).	

ORDER STEGANOPODES.

Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>).	Gannet (<i>Sula bassana</i>).
Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax graculus</i>).	

ORDER HERODIONES.

Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>).

Orders to which Birds belong

ORDER ANSERES.

Grey Lag Goose (<i>Anser cinereus</i>).	Shoveler (<i>Spatula clypeata</i>).
Mute Swan (<i>Cygnus olor</i>).	Tufted Duck (<i>Fuligula cristata</i>).
Common Sheldrake (<i>Tadorna cornuta</i>).	Pochard (<i>Fuligula ferina</i>).
Wigeon (<i>Mareca penelope</i>).	Eider Duck (<i>Somateria mollissima</i>).
Wild Duck (<i>Anas boscas</i>).	Common Scoter (<i>Ædemia nigra</i>).
Gadwall (<i>Chaulelasmus streperus</i>).	Goosander (<i>Mergus merganser</i>).
Garganey (<i>Querquedula circia</i>).	Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>).
Common Teal (<i>Querquedula crecca</i>).	

ORDER COLUMBÆ.

Ring Dove (<i>Columba palumbus</i>).	Rock Dove (<i>Columba livia</i>).
Stock Dove (<i>Columba oenas</i>).	Turtle Dove (<i>Turtur communis</i>).

ORDER GALLINÆ.

Pheasant (<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>).	Ptarmigan (<i>Lagopus mutus</i>).
Red-legged Partridge (<i>Caccabis rufa</i>).	Red Grouse (<i>Lagopus scoticus</i>).
Common Partridge. (<i>Perdix cinerea</i>).	Black Grouse (<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>).
Quail (<i>Coturnix communis</i>).	Capercaillie (<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>).

Orders to which Birds belong

ORDER FULICARIÆ.

Water Rail (<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>).	Moorhen (<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>).
Spotted Crake (<i>Porzana maruetta</i>).	Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>).
Corncrake (<i>Crex pratensis</i>).	

ORDER LIMICOLÆ.

Stone Curlew (<i>Edicnemus scolopax</i>)	Woodcock (<i>Scolopax rusticula</i>).
Golden Plover (<i>Charadrius pluvialis</i>).	Common Snipe (<i>Gallinago cælestis</i>).
Kentish Plover (<i>Ægialitis cantiana</i>).	Dunlin (<i>Tringa alpina</i>).
Ringed Plover (<i>Ægialitis hiaticula</i>).	Common Sandpiper (<i>Tringoides hypoleucus</i>).
Dotterel (<i>Endromias morinellus</i>).	Redshank (<i>Totanus calidris</i>).
Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vulgaris</i>).	Greenshank (<i>Totanus canescens</i>).
Oystercatcher (<i>Hæmatopus ostralegus</i>).	Whimbrel (<i>Numenius phæopus</i>).
Red-necked Phalarope (<i>Phalaropus hyperboreus</i>).	Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>).

ORDER GAVIÆ.

Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna macrura</i>).	Lesser Tern (<i>Sterna minuta</i>).
Common Tern (<i>Sterna fluviatilis</i>).	Sandwich Tern (<i>Sterna cantiaca</i>).
Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougalli</i>).	Kittiwake Gull (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>).

Orders to which Birds belong

Herring Gull
(*Larus argentatus*).

Lesser Black-backed Gull
(*Larus fuscus*).

Common Gull
(*Larus canus*).

Great Black-backed Gull
(*Larus marinus*).

Black-headed Gull
(*Larus ridibundus*).

Common Skua
(*Stercorarius catarrhactes*).

Richardson's Skua
(*Stercorarius crepidatus*).

ORDER TUBINARES.

Stormy Petrel
(*Procellaria pelagica*).

Fork-tailed Petrel
(*Procellaria leucorrhoa*).

Manx Shearwater
(*Puffinus anglorum*).

Fulmar Petrel
(*Fulmarus glacialis*).

ORDER PYGOPODES.

Black-throated Diver
(*Colymbus arcticus*).

Red-throated Diver
(*Colymbus septentrionalis*).

Great Crested Grebe
(*Podiceps cristatus*).

Little Grebe
(*Tachybaptus fluviatilis*).

Razorbill
(*Alca torda*).

Common Guillemot
(*Lomvia troile*).

Black Guillemot
(*Uria grylle*).

Puffin
(*Fratercula arctica*).

British Bird Life

I.—BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*).

WHAT more mellifluous songster could grace the opening of a work devoted to British bird life? The Blackbird is a favourite everywhere, and for good reasons. He is one of the kings of song, one of the chief choristers in Nature's great orchestra. He enlivens the woods with sweet music as early as February, and gives to all bird-lovers much joy and contentment. His cheery song uttered early in the year is of a very welcome description, for it reminds us that the spring is at hand, and that the coming of our summer visitors is fast approaching. No British bird is more dear to us, if we except the Thrush and the Skylark. Some writers assert that the song is of a melancholy description — others that it is decidedly exhilarating. Early in the year, when so few birds give vent to their feelings of joy at the bursting of the hedges, and the first signs of flowery spring, the music of the Blackbird strikes me as being of a particularly gladsome character. It is a beautifully mellow, fluty and measured song. Perhaps when autumn is here and few birds are singing, then it may be that the music may appear more in the nature of a vesper song, whereas earlier in the year it was as a matin; indeed has not the poet sung:—

“Thou hast thy matin and thy vesper song.”

The notes are particularly mournful after a thunderstorm. At all times, however, this bird is a general favourite, and still flourishes in spite of the persecution meted out to him by the fruit grower and gardener. Is not every labourer worthy of his hire? In the fruit season it cannot be denied a great many currants, raspberries and

British Bird Life

cherries are taken, but what does his food consist of during the remainder of the year? Snails and obnoxious insects are destroyed wholesale, and the good done is far and away greater than the harm.

The Blackbird is an early breeder; nests are often found as early as February and as late as September. Some few years ago I found a nest with five freshly-incubated eggs at Bow Brickhill, Beds., as late as October, and in



BLACKBIRD ($\frac{1}{3}$ Natural Size).

December 1898 I actually knew of a nest with young ones, fully fledged, but the season was altogether phenomenal.

The situations chosen are various. Early nests are generally placed very low down in the hedgerow, or in shrubs, plantations and gardens. Bramble and other bushes, and trees of all kinds are also chosen; on one occasion I found a nest in a disused old cart wheel, the nest being placed in the axle! Evergreens are very favourite resorts, and other situations which might be mentioned are banks, sheds and tree trunks. The nest is a well-built structure;



NEST AND EGGS OF BLACKBIRD.

Blackcap

the sides are carefully cemented together with clay, the major portion being of dry grasses, and sometimes straw, roots, leaves, moss and bents. The lining consists of wool, hair and finer grasses.

Five eggs are generally laid, but I have found as many as six, and as low a number as three. The ground colour is a bright greenish-blue, blotched, streaked, spotted, or sprinkled with light or reddish-brown, with a purplish tinge.

As one rambles along the countryside during the nesting season, the alarm-cry of the Blackbird may frequently be heard as the bird flits out of the hedgerow, and this performance often leads to the detection of the nest.

The plumage is so well known that a detailed description is unnecessary, but it should be stated that the female bird is much lighter in colouring, and the beak of the male only is orange-yellow or golden in colour, that of the female being dusky. Length, ten inches.

II.—BLACKCAP (*Sylvia atricapilla*).

THIS summer visitor is perhaps, excepting the Nightingale, one of the most welcome. It arrives in April from Northern Africa or Southern Europe, and soon commences its pleasing warble. Many writers assert that it is little inferior to the Nightingale in song, but in my opinion the two birds' songs are of a totally different character. His bubbling little warble—uttered as the bird dexterously flits along the top of some hedgerow, or perched on the pliant branches of some bush—is one of the chief bird sounds of spring. It is somewhat snatchy in utterance, but the notes are mellow and sweet and follow on one another very rapidly. There are no harsh notes as in the song of the Greater Whitethroat.

It breeds through May and June. Bramble bushes and hedgerows, tangled thickets and shrubberies are the situations generally chosen for a nesting site—the first named I have found to be a very favourite spot—and the nest is usually placed near the ground, but never on it, so far as my experience goes. It is not particularly strong, but by no means untidy. Fibrous roots, the dried stems of goosegrass, etc., and spiders' webs are used, and hair and fine rootlets constitute the lining.

British Bird Life

The five eggs are of a variable description. Some are hardly distinguishable from those of the Garden Warbler, but as a rule those of the Blackcap are more highly coloured. Two conspicuous sets of variations occur, and these it will be best to describe. One is in ground colour dirty-white, marbled and clouded with yellowish-brown, spotted and streaked with darker brown. The second variety possesses a ground colour of brick-dust red, and is thickly blotched or spotted, blotched mostly, with a much darker shade of the same, with here and there a few minute spots or streaks of rich purplish-brown. I have noticed too, that the eggs of the variety last described are generally larger.

Nearly all our summer visitors are indispensable boons in the myriads of insects which they destroy, and the Blackcap is one of these insectivorous birds. The food of all the Warblers is more or less alike, and it will be as well to set out in the history of this bird—the first Warbler dealt with—the insects, etc., on which they feed, so that hereafter repetition will be unnecessary. The list includes various larvæ, spiders, caterpillars, grubs, worms, pupæ, beetles, butterflies, weevils, cockchafers, earwigs, woodlice, moths, blight, the young of wasps, chrysalides, and hornets, grasshoppers, leaf-rollers, glow-worms, centipedes, etc. Here then is a testimonial which *should* stand this delightful family of Warblers in good stead, since in return for the above list the only toll that is taken is perhaps a few small soft fruits. The Warblers are specially to be commended to the notice of bird persecutors for the way in which they destroy the little caterpillars of the pea-green moth, a very destructive insect, and especially so to oak trees. This bird is also very fond of elderberries.

The black cap is the distinguishing feature of the male bird, the remainder of the plumage being generally ashy-grey and bluish-grey. The female has the top of the head reddish-brown, whilst the other parts are somewhat browner than in those of the male bird. Length, five and a half inches.

III.—BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula europæa*).

It cannot be said that “Bully” is a favourite everywhere, for by gardeners and fruit growers he is often persecuted.

Bullfinch

Sorry, too, am I to admit that the case for the prosecution is a strong one, and counsel has not much difficulty in making out his brief. The Bullfinch does take a great many buds from fruit trees, and the crux of the whole question is—does he take too many for the well-being of the tree, and if he did not take any would the tree suffer from over-production? But then, fruit is not obtainable all the year round, neither are fruit buds, and it is in this respect we must look at the matter. What does the Bullfinch feed on during the major portion of the year? During the rest of the year the food consists of insects and the larvæ of the destructive winter moth, seeds and berries. The seeds and berries eaten are those of the dock, thistle, groundsel, plantain, blackberries, hips and haws, rowan berries, chickweed, ragwort, and other objectionable weeds. One Bullfinch alone has been known to take 238 seeds of the common spear-thistle in twenty minutes.

Bramble bushes and hawthorn hedges I have observed to be the chief nesting sites, but thickets and dense undergrowth are also chosen, and, it is stated, sometimes among the branches of a small fir tree. The nest cannot possibly be mistaken for that of any other British bird. It is very neat, composed chiefly of small twigs and fibrous roots neatly woven together. The lining consists of finer rootlets, and occasionally, some writers say, “a little wool or a few feathers,” but I have sometimes found a little horsehair as well. It breeds in May, June and July.

The eggs usually number five. The ground colour is greenish-blue, spotted and speckled, and occasionally streaked, with dark purplish-brown and pinkish-brown. The markings are generally in the form of a ring at the larger end, but very often they are distributed, more or less, over the whole egg.

In its natural state the Bullfinch is not a great singer. One has to be quite close to the bird before the faint little warble is at all audible. It also utters a plaintive call-note. He should be taken much notice of when kept in confinement. Here he soon learns to pipe deliciously, and a heavy price is set on a good bird. Most of these pipers come from Germany, and command anything from ten shillings to ten pounds. In captivity this bird is a regular glutton after hemp seed, but it is not good for him, and often turns his plumage black. The Bullfinch pairs for life.

British Bird Life

Rosy-red breast ; grey slate-coloured back ; white rump ; blue-black head, wings and tail. The female is much less gaudy, the whole being duller ; the breast is warmish-brown and the upper parts brownish-grey. Length, six and a quarter inches.

IV.—BUNTING, CIRL (*Emberiza cirrus*).

THIS is one of the most beautiful birds belonging to the Bunting family, and is resident in the British Islands. It is probably met with less frequently than any of the five remaining species, but there appears to be no reason why it should not become more plentiful, since it is by no means a great singer, and therefore escapes the clutches of the bird-catcher. It is curious that the Ciril Bunting does not open up fresh breeding grounds. It returns to its old haunts year after year, and it is rare indeed to hear of its breeding in any fresh locality. It appears to be restricted to the southern and western counties, and thus its distribution is very local.

As I have already stated, this Bunting does not possess vocal powers of a very high order. The song is somewhat similar to that of the Yellow Bunting, and is uttered from the summit of a tree. The notes are short and rapid, but lack the well-known long thin note so characteristic of the bird whose song it more nearly resembles.

It belongs to the Finch tribe, and, like the majority of that interesting family, is an insect as well as a seed eater. It is during the summer that insect food, etc., such as grasshoppers, earwigs, worms, etc., is partaken of, and in autumn and winter, seeds of grasses, knot-grass, chick-weed, sorrel and other weeds are resorted to, as well as the seeds of cereal plants, especially oats. This catalogue of food may be taken as a fair sample of that which constitutes the diet of the various Buntings, and although the species now under consideration does not partake perhaps of the whole of the dietary here provided, its food is included in it. The Ciril Bunting does very little harm indeed, if any. It may take a few grains of corn from the farmyard, but the farmer must remember that during the summer it is insectivorous ; that the young are fed almost entirely upon young grasshoppers, and that a great many seeds of obnoxious weeds are

Corn Bunting

destroyed during the remaining portion of the year. The only two local names known to me are—Black-throated Yellow Hammer and French Yellow Hammer.

It nests in May, and the situation chosen is generally some low bush—a furze bush is a favourite site—but it is also stated that occasionally the nest is placed on the ground. The materials used are roots, moss and dried stalks, with a lining of fibrous roots and hair, but the latter is not invariably present.

Four to five eggs are laid, which are very similar to those of the Yellow Bunting, but are of a bluer tinge, and the markings are of a more distinct character.

Above, the colouration is chestnut with streaks of black. The head and back of neck is olive, streaked in the same manner as last mentioned; greenish-olive rump, with dusky streaks; stripe over eye and one underneath, yellow; black throat and a little further on a collar of pale sulphur colour; breast, olive-grey; belly, pale dull yellow. The female bird lacks the black and yellow face markings. Length, six and a half inches.

V.—BUNTING, CORN (*Emberiza miliaria*).

A GREAT deal of ignorance prevails in the country as to this Bunting, which is the largest of the five breeding on our shores. Those people who do know the bird, at least a great many of them, call it the Common Bunting, but the term is somewhat misapplied, as in some localities it is not nearly so plentiful as the Yellow Bunting. Perhaps it is because of its inconspicuous plumage and inharmonious song that the Corn Bunting is not more generally known.

This species also cannot be classed as a song bird, indeed it possesses but a few notes, somewhat after the style of the Yellow Bunting, but when uttered the song comes to an abrupt termination and appears as if unfinished. Bechstein says that “Buntings have only four or five notes, and from their dwelling on the R in the last, they have been given the name of Stocking-weavers!”

Although the name of the bird implies that it is partial to cornfields, it is also found tenanting commons, meadows and other places of an open character. Very frequently it is to be seen perched on telegraph wires, a peculiarity

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pointed out by a great many observers, and one that I can safely endorse.

The food is similar to that of the bird which last received attention, and during winter it associates with others of the feathered tribe, resorting to the farm, rickyards and stubble fields for grain and the like. This Bunting is also very fond of dabbling on a manure heap for worms and insects.

The flight is heavy, and it is accompanied by a whirring noise, with the legs hanging low. The bird does not appear to be nearly so sprightly as some of its relatives.

A low bush, or amongst coarse grass, sometimes on the ground, are the nesting sites. The nest is of rough exterior, composed of coarse dry grass and straw, with a neat lining of finer grasses, fibrous roots, and sometimes a little horsehair. It nests in May and June.

The four to six eggs are in ground colour pale yellowish or a dull purplish-white, streaked and blotched with dark brown, with here and there undermarkings of greyish-purple.

Upper parts yellowish-brown with spots of a dusky character; the markings underneath are yellowish-white, streaked and spotted with dusky. Length, seven and a half inches.

VI.—BUNTING, REED (*Emberiza schoeniclus*).

THE black head of this bird has often led to the name Black-headed Bunting being accorded to it, and this causes confusion, as the true Black-headed Bunting (*Emberiza melanocephala*) has been obtained in this country only on one solitary occasion. The name by which the bird is generally known, however, is Reed Sparrow, and as its appearance somewhat resembles the Sparrow family—at least more than any of its relatives—there is some ground for the local name it has been given.

It is a bird of the waterside, and it is only during severe weather that it quits these situations for the farmyards and the neighbouring fields, when it congregates with others of the Finch tribe.

The song consists of four or five notes, uttered in a persistent manner. Walking along, one may see the bird perched on some reed uttering his reedy song, the frail

Reed Bunting

structure on which he has taken up his station swaying to and fro the while. When disturbed, the bird flies a little farther on, and these manœuvres will be repeated several times, until at last he goes right back again and takes up the position first occupied.

The food consists of insects, seeds and grain, and it should be borne in mind that in the destruction of the second named not only are the seeds of obnoxious weeds



NEST AND EGGS OF REED BUNTING.

destroyed, but hurtful insects are thereby prevented from harbouring in them.

Marshy situations, amongst the coarse tangled grasses, under a tussock of sedge, or in a low bush are generally chosen for a nesting site from March to July, but some few years ago I came across quite a score of nests all within a very slight range, which were built in osiers some three feet from the ground. To all appearances the situation in which I found these nests is an uncommon one, for most writers state that the bird builds on or close to the ground. The materials used are the leaves or stems of the reed, leaves, dry grass, and other herbage, and the lining consists of horsehair, the flower of the reed, and fibrous

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roots. If at all, the rim of the nest only is attached to the osier stems, and in this respect my observations entirely coincide with those of Montagu.

The four or five eggs cannot possibly be mistaken for those of any other British Bunting. The ground colour is white, dull grey, or dull brown, with a tinge of purple, streaked with a very rich purplish-brown, and also spotted, but mostly streaked. The eggs are smaller than those of the Corn, Cirl, or Yellow Buntings.

Head and throat black, with a speckling of light brown in winter; sides of neck and nape white, as also is a line which extends to the base of the beak. Upper portions dusky and reddish-brown; under parts white, streaked with dusky on the flanks. The female has a reddish-brown head with dusky spots; the white neck is not so conspicuous as in the male, and the underneath is reddish-white with dusky spots. Length, six inches.

VII.—BUNTING, SNOW (*Plectrophanes nivalis*).

To those resident in the south this Bunting is only known as a winter visitor. At this period of the year large flocks are by no means uncommon. I have observed the bird even in April, and in 1898 as late as the commencement of May I saw a few Snow Buntings with some Chaffinches in Bedfordshire. In winter those that pay us a visit are very partial to the seashore, and here they may be looked for with a degree of certainty.

Beautiful indeed is the Snowflake—by which name the bird is also known—and when all nature is bare the plumage is shown off to perfection.

Both Saxby and Seebohm have given most excellent accounts of the Snow Bunting, and it will be as well to quote a few lines from the former as to the bird's appearance northwards, and the latter's account of the song.

Says Saxby:—"Seen against a dark hillside or a lowering sky, a flock of these birds presents an exceedingly beautiful appearance, and it may then be seen how aptly the term 'Snowflake' has been applied to the species. I am acquainted with no more pleasing combination of sight and sound than that afforded when a cloud of these birds, backed by a dark grey sky, descends, as it were, in a

Yellow Bunting

shower to the ground, to the music of their own sweet, tinkling notes." What a striking and vivid picture is here set forth by that delightful ornithologist!

As regards the song, Henry Seebohm describes it as under:—"Whilst the female is busy with the duties of incubation the male sings freely, sometimes as he sits upon the top of a rock, but often flinging himself into the air like a shuttle-cock, and then descending in a spiral curve, with wings and tail expanded, singing all the time. The song is a low and melodious warbling, not unlike that of the Shore Lark." It is worthy of note that the song of this Bunting is the best possessed by any of the five which are indigenous to the British Isles, and strange indeed it may sound to those acquainted only with the four found in the south to hear of a Bunting uttering "a low and melodious warbling."

The food consists of insects and seeds, the young being fed, so Hudson says, on the larvæ of gnats.

The nest, which is composed of moss, rootlets and dry grass, with a lining of hair, feathers or down, is placed in the crevices of rocks or amongst stones, on mountain tops and other places of a weird and untenantable description. It breeds in May, June and July.

The five to seven eggs have a greyish-white ground colour, tinged with pale greenish-blue, with reddish-brown blotches and spots, and underlying traces of pale grey and pale brown.

Head, neck, and a part of the wings and under portions white; upper parts black, with a tinge of red somewhat scattered. During the winter the white head and black back is mixed with reddish-brown. The female has the white on the head and the upper parts mottled with dusky, and the colours in this latter sex are not of such a pure character. Length, six inches and three-quarters.

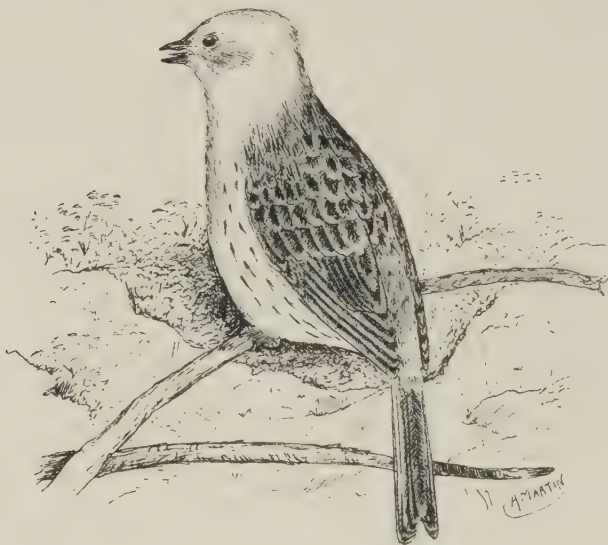
VIII.—BUNTING, YELLOW (*Emberiza citrinella*).

LAST, but by no means least, on our list of Buntings is the beautiful Yellow Hammer, by which name the bird is more generally known, as well as Scribbling Lark, Writing Lark, Yellow Yeorling, and many other localisations.

This bird is one of the delights of the countryside, and

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without doubt it is in the front rank of our highly-coloured Britishers. The birds of other countries—the new world, for instance—are dazzling in their splendour, but we have in England many feathered beauties, and what we lack in colouring we gain in song, for where are such delightful songsters as the Blackbird, the two Thrushes, Wren, Skylark and Woodlark, Chaffinch, Robin, Hedge Sparrow, and



YELLOW BUNTING ($\frac{1}{2}$ Natural Size).

others, and I have purposely omitted to include a single summer migrant?

It is no great songster, consisting as its song does of but half a dozen short, reedy notes. Old-time lore has compared its song—and not inaptly—to “A little bit of bread and *no* cheese,” with an emphasis on the *no*, and the *cheese* long drawn out.

It is a very active and sprightly bird, and perhaps the best known in the country of any of its family. It is not distinguished by its song, which is by no means displeasing, so much as by its gay attire and its flight, as it flits along the hedgerow by odd jerks and gesticulations.

Common Buzzard

The food consists of insects, and the seeds of various wild cereals, weeds, waste corn, berries, etc. The bird may do a little harm by taking corn from newly drilled fields, if not deeply sown, but the good done is far greater than this slight pilfering.

I have always found a hedge bank to be the favourite nesting site of this bird, although it often builds on the ground—especially on a piece of waste ground by the way-side—and other situations are in a low hedge or bush. It breeds from April to August.

The nest is composed of dry grass, with perhaps a little moss; within is a layer of fine grasses, and the lining is made up of horsehair and rootlets. It is often of large dimensions.

A good deal of controversy has taken place as to the number of eggs laid. Many writers state four to five, but three is undoubtedly the more usual number. In colour they are dingy-white—with a vinous tinge—and scribbled over with purplish-brown and purplish-grey.

The rich bright colours of the bird are made up of—head, neck and underparts golden-yellow, with a sprinkling of dark olive; black back, interspersed with reddish-grey; yellow breast, spotted with red. In the female the yellow is not of so bright a character, and is spotted with dull reddish-brown. Length, six and a quarter inches.

IX.—BUZZARD, COMMON (*Buteo vulgaris*).

THIS beautiful bird is decreasing as a British breeding species, and there seems little hope but that, like the Bittern, it may soon have to be counted as a lost British bird.

Wild districts in Wales and Scotland still claim the bird as a regular breeder, and it is to be hoped that some charitably disposed person owning land in the localities where the bird is still found will instruct keepers to look after the few nests which are built on their ground. Much has been done in this respect of late years in the north, especially in the case of the Skua and many sea birds, and I note too that a landowner in Norfolk is setting aside several acres for the protection of other birds.

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I am informed by a well-known naturalist that the pole-trap has been responsible for the slaughter of many of these birds, and he has himself found Buzzards firmly clasped by the legs—the teeth of the trap almost severing the legs from the body.

Although called the “Common” Buzzard, the term is misapplied, for, as has been already stated, the bird is by no means “common,” and yet a half century or so ago it *was* “common” in Norfolk and other counties. Doubtless the slaughter carried on is one of the results of game preservation. Yet I am decidedly of the opinion that the preservation of game has had beneficial results in so far as our smaller birds are concerned, for the vigilance displayed by keepers and others in ordering off any intruders enables the small birds to nest without fear of molestation, which otherwise would not be the case. But then there is no excuse for the wanton destruction carried on against birds of prey by these “pheasant-worshippers,” as so eminent an ornithologist as Mr Howard Saunders describes them. Mr Hudson says:—“My one consolation in this sad portion of my work, which tells of the noble and useful species whose ‘doom is sealed,’ is that I am not writing for grown men, but for the young, who are not yet the slaves of a contemptible convention, nor have come under a system which has only been too mildly described as ‘stupid’ by every British ornithologist during the last five or six decades.”

Mr Hudson also says:—“It is of a somewhat sedentary disposition, and in seeking its food displays little of the dashing and courageous spirit of the Falcons.”

When flying, with the wings extended upwards and otherwise, the bird presents a noble appearance. The flight is slow, but majestic, and the bird is a graceful ornament to the landscape.

The note is well described by Sir William Jardine as “a shrill and melancholy whistle,” melancholy because of the nature of the surroundings in which it is found.

Why the bird should have been so persecuted it is difficult to understand, for it does an amount of good, feeding on insects, small mammals (being very fond of moles), reptiles, and various birds. The food is always dashed upon, and snatched from the ground.

Sometimes the nest is placed in crevices of rocky sea



CAPERCAILLIE ($\frac{1}{8}$ Natural Size).

Capercaillie

cliffs, but more often it is to be found in the tall trees of woods and forests. The nest is of big dimensions, consisting of large sticks outside, and smaller ones, twigs for the most part, with a lining of wool, leaves and dry grass. When built on a cliff the nest is always constructed on a platform, or at the base of a tree growing from the side of a cliff.

Two to four eggs are laid which are very variable in colour and shape. The general colour is white, with a faint tinge of pale red or blue, spotted, streaked, blotched, and clouded with reddish-brown, with undermarkings of purplish-grey. It breeds in May.

The upper parts of the head and neck are dark brown, with a mottling of brown of a darker shade; lead-coloured beak; cere, irides and feet yellow. The length of the male is about twenty inches; the female exceeds her mate by two inches.

X.—CAPERCAILLIE (*Tetrao urogallus*).

THIS noble game bird became extinct in our country during the eighteenth century, but was re-introduced in the years 1837-38, and has now become firmly established again in the north.

It is interesting to note that the difference in size between the male and female Capercaillie is greater than in that of any other game bird, and that whereas the male bird of Scotland weighs about eleven pounds, the cock bird found in Northern Europe turns the scale at seventeen pounds. The female weighs between four and five pounds only.

The tender shoots of the Scotch fir are much sought after by this bird, as well as the buds and shoots of plants, and various sorts of berries are also eaten.

The male utters a powerful double cry, which has been likened to "peller-peller-peller," repeated several times; whilst the female expresses a hoarse "gock-gock-gock," and when alarmed with brood, "gluk, gluk, gluk."

The nest, if such it can be called, is built in May or June, and consists of a slight depression scratched in the ground among bilberries or heather, sometimes under a bush; no materials are used except perhaps a few blades of grass.

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From six to twelve eggs are laid, but as many as fifteen have been recorded. These are pale reddish-yellow, speckled, spotted or blotched with brown, and are very similar to those of the Black Grouse, but longer.

For the description of the plumage I cannot do better than quote from Mr Hudson's *British Birds*: "Feathers of the throat elongated, black; head and neck dusky; eyes with a bare red skin above and a white spot below; wings brown speckled with black; breast lustrous green; belly black with white spots; rump and flanks marked with undulating lines of black and ash colour; tail black with white spots; beak horn-white. Female—A third smaller, barred and spotted with tawny red, black, and white; throat tawny red; breast deep red; tail dark red with black bars, white at the tip."

Length, from thirty-three to thirty-six inches.

XI.—CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla cœlebs*).

It is safe to assert, I think, that no bird would be missed so much from the countryside as the sprightly Chaffinch. The rambler invariably listens for the shrill "pink, pink," and then later on, when spring is at hand, the pleasing song with the cadenza at the end.

What is more enjoyable in April than to watch the Chaffinch as it flits from the fresh green hedgerow, and with agile movements parades down the road in front of us, then off into a tree hard by to utter its sprightly music whilst the female is busy in the thorn bush weaving the moss and lichen cup?

"Full and clear the sprightly ditty rings,
Cheering the brooding dame."

Then, again, the Beech Finch, Boldie, Buckfinch, Chaffy, Horse Dung Finch, Horse Finch, Pink, Shelly, Shilta, Skelly, Spink, Spinx, Twink, Wet Bird, White Finch, by which names the Chaffinch is known in different localities, builds what is generally regarded as the most beautiful nest of any bird nesting in Great Britain, the Long-tailed Titmouse excepted.

The Finch now receiving attention warrants our protection as a boon to the agriculturist and horticulturist. The



NEST AND EGGS OF CHAFFINCH.

Chaffinch

food consists of moths, caterpillars, flies, cockchafers, looper caterpillars, blight, chrysalides, grubs, crane flies, eggs of insects, wood-boring beetles, seeds of obnoxious weeds such as groundsel, chickweed, wild mustard, charlock, knot-grass and wild berries ! In return for this service a few fruit buds may be taken in the early spring, garden seeds and shooting corn, as well as other seeds during the year, if unprotected and not deeply sown. The young, too, are fed for the most part on green caterpillars. To revert to the song of the bird, it is curious to relate that the cock birds sing one against the other, and a terrible combat is often the result of this bird jealousy. The notes are joyous and loud-ringing with sweetness, and when once heard "the running down the scale," and then towards the end "up again," is not easily forgotten.

The favourite nesting site appears to be a hawthorn hedge, either low or tall—the hedges by the railway side are very likely spots—and others which may be mentioned are, in the forks of trees, sometimes small, and at others, of large dimensions, as well as on the side of trees, the structure appearing like a ball or small arm of moss and lichen ; amongst furze and other bushes ; and in ivy growing on the trunks of trees. Fruit trees also are much patronised. Such exquisite and delicate workmanship as the structure itself is done scant justice to in a written description—to be appreciated, the nest, *in its natural element*, must be seen. Moss, lichens and wool, woven together in the form of a compact and symmetrical mass, with a lining of hair and feathers, is the composition. The nature of the surroundings, however, has much to do with the materials chosen. Thus, I have found the nest in a blossoming thorn, the snow-white blossoms all neatly intertwined on the outside, so as to be scarcely distinguishable from a bunch of blossoms, and also in a like situation I have frequently observed pieces of white paper brought into requisition. Lastly, when placed in a hawthorn hedge in the early part of May, before the bloom is out, I have found nests with fresh green moss, and no lichen or wool outside, so that the homestead appeared like a cluster of fresh green leaves. It breeds from April to July.

The eggs vary both in colour and size. Some are indistinguishable from those of the Brambling. They number four or five, and a short description, which

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is adequate enough too, I think, is, ground colour pale bluish-green, often with a tinge of light red, spotted and blotched with dull purplish-brown.

Many writers assert that during the autumn season the sexes separate. It cannot be disputed that flocks of either sex are frequently met with during the winter, but I have observed both male and female birds *in mixed flocks*.

It has a black forehead; greyish-blue crown and nape; chestnut back and scapulars with a green tinge; green rump; chestnut-red breast, which fades into white on the belly; black wings, with two bands of white; coverts of secondaries edged with yellow; black tail, the two central feathers ashy-grey, the two outer, on either side, black, with a white band of a broad and oblique character. Six inches in length.

The female is not clothed in such brilliant hues as her mate, the colours are duller, the colouring generally being ashy-grey and olive-yellow; the white bars are not of so pure a character as those in the male bird.

XII.—CHIFF CHAFF (*Phylloscopus rufus*).

THIS bird generally makes its appearance some time during March, being one of our summer visitors. It will be news to many to know that some of these birds are, however, resident throughout the whole year in Cornwall. It is a bird which caused Gilbert White much astonishment as to how such a frail, tiny little gem of feather-land could traverse across miles of ocean, when in this fair land of ours it seems scarcely able to flit from bough to bough. And, indeed, during the last hundred years or so—that is since the Selborne naturalist's time—the astonishment and wonderment at such bird mystery has not lessened. How the minute Warbler wings its way, without any sign of fatigue whatever, on reaching our country from the shores of the Mediterranean, where it is found during the winter, is one of those mysteries of the bird world which will perhaps never be satisfactorily explained.

I wrote several letters to the London papers as to the shooting of a Chiff Chaff at Castle Bromwich, Warwick, on February 16, 1899, and the following is from the *St James's Gazette*

Chiff Chaff

of April 10, 1899 :—" Mr Percival Westell's very justifiable reprobation of the wanton destruction of the first Chiff Chaff has brought us a letter from the Earl of Bradford expressing his regret that this cruel act should have happened at Castle Bromwich. 'Often and often,' writes the Earl, 'in my old garden there, have I watched for and welcomed the first arrival of the Chiff Chaff as the harbinger of spring, and wondered, like Mr Westell, how its tiny frame could have survived the long journey across the sea to cheer and brighten us with its happy note and pretty



CHIFF CHAFF ($\frac{2}{3}$ Natural Size).

ways. That it should have met with so thoughtless and cruel a reception all true lovers of country life must deplore. May I also express my strong concurrence in what Mr Westell says as to the value of the Green Plover, which he rightly calls one of the farmer's best friends? Though as fond of shooting as anyone, nothing would ever induce me to put my gun up at so useful a bird as the harmless Lapwing." The *Gazette* concludes by stating :—" If the gallant sportsman who was so eager to secure a specimen of one of the earliest of our summer visitors is not very much ashamed of himself by this time, he certainly ought to be. They may do these things on the Continent, but Englishmen who are fit to be allowed a gun should know better."

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The two notes—resembling in sound the name given to the bird—is one of the chief bird sounds of spring. In April I have heard half a dozen or more uttering their notes in unison, and, mingled as they often are, with the delightful little song of the Willow Warbler, the effect is charming. Though unknown by sight to many dwellers in the country, the bird is of much service in the destruction of insects. It works for the most part unobserved, though the well-known “chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff,” tells us that the male is busy in the tree tops.

Does not the bird do an immense amount of good in its destruction of blight? But let the author of *British Birds in their Haunts* prove the case. The Rev. C. A. Johns says:—“For two successive years a little yellowish bird, scarcely bigger than a Wren (the Chiff Chaff), has established himself in my garden about the middle of April, and sedulously devoted himself to clearing away the aphides which infested some China roses trained against the walls of my house. Occasionally he would flutter against the windows, and give his attention to the spiders and gnats which nestled in the corner of the panes.”

The nest is plain but beautiful, being semi-domed. I have invariably found it placed in a hedge bank, generally amongst long grass, and if the bird is not watched it is a very difficult matter to find it. Indeed, when the exact spot is marked down, the outside materials of leaves, dead grass and moss so nearly match the surroundings that I have often given up the search in vain. Inside is a mass of feathers, and in the nest of no other British breeding bird, save perhaps the Long-tailed Tit and one or two others, is such a profusion of feathers used. The five or six eggs, white, with a few dark purple-brown spots or small blotches, lay snugly and securely in this downy bed, and on the fingers being thrust into the lateral opening to take out an egg, care should be taken, or one or more will be smashed. It breeds from April to June.

The plumage above is olive-green with a tinge of yellow; a faint yellowish-white streak above the eye; yellowish-white underneath, feathers on leg greyish-white. Length, four inches and three-quarters.

Chough

XIII.—CHOUGH (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*).

THE Chough, so far as the British Isles are concerned, is “everywhere decreasing”; in point of fact, the “Red-billed Crow” is only found at the present time breeding on the Cornish coast, at Lundy Island, the rocks of the Calf of Man, the coast of Wales, and a few situations on the Scottish and Irish coasts.

There seems little hope that this extremely interesting member of the Crow family will be left to us for many more years—the same mournful story has once more to be told that we must make the most of the few pairs, comparatively speaking, that we still have breeding in the country.

With its long red beak and red legs and feet—black body, with purple and green reflections—the bird presents a noble appearance as it is seen on the cliffs of the sea-coast or dabbling along the sandy shore! Its length is sixteen inches.

It cannot escape attention when seen—indeed it causes much surprise to the novice in bird life that such a bird breeds in this country, and it probably comes nearest to the Jackdaw as regards its life and habits.

The note of the Cornish Chough—yet another name for the bird in tin-land—resembles that of the Daw, with the exception that it is more melodious and ringing, and Mr Hett has put it into syllables or words, thus:—Call, “creea-creea”; “klee-o, klee-o, 'k'chahr’”; “deea, dea”; “ching”; “chough - chough,” or “khew, khew” (peculiar), which, although it may not convey much idea of its vocal powers to the uninitiated, will be readily accepted by anyone who is acquainted with the bird under notice.

When by the sea, it feeds upon any animal matter that may be cast upon the shore; and traverses considerable distances inland after worms, grubs, carrion, berries, and perhaps grain. It follows the plough in the same manner as Rooks and Black-headed Gulls, and does an immense amount of good in the destruction of wireworm and the like.

The Chough does not like isolation, but lives in communities; indeed both Jackdaws and Choughs are often found breeding close together. In the face of some rocky, precipitous sea-cliff, some hole or crevice, or, it is said, in the holes in ruins, the nest is placed—generally in the

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most inaccessible position. It consists of twigs and sticks, with roots, dry grass, and a no mean sprinkling of hair, fur and wool.

The four to six eggs are dirty white, slightly tinged with yellowish or blue, blotched and spotted, and especially so at the larger end, with various shades of ash-colour and pale brown. It breeds in May.

XIV.—COOT (*Fulica atra*).

FROM my boyhood I remember the call of the Coot—"k-o," clear-ringing, and many times repeated, as well as "crew" or "kew,"—and I have often been scared by this bird flitting out of the rushes as I have stooped down to refresh the contents of my bait-can or to soak ground bait. I have often sat and watched the bird as he came out of the rushes on the opposite side of the pool, then observing me, back again to his hiding place.

I have spent many pleasant hours watching the bird under consideration. What lovely scenes are these? There on the right bank is a row of fir trees, with the light green tassels on the terminal branches; in between are gorgeous bunches of rhododendrons and graceful weeping willows fringing right to the water's edge. On the left is pasture land, cuckoo flowers are dotted about here and there, together with forget-me-nots, while close to the water various aquatic herbage affords wild fowl a sanctuary indeed. Across the lake the Coot swims easily and gracefully, leaving behind divergent lines of pure silver.

Perhaps the fact of the Coot not being so well known is owing to its being so nearly akin to the Moorhen, for its appearance is that of a large plain-coloured Water-hen. It differs from the last named, however, in keeping more to the water; the water is its home, and it rarely wanders far from it. I have come across the Moorhen in pasture lands some considerable distance away from water—the Coot never. Probably owing to the draining of the fens this bird does not seem so plentiful as in the past, but it is pleasing to record that on our large sheets of water, stagnant pools and sluggish streams, margined with reeds, it is still found in considerable numbers.

Cormorant

It may be distinguished from the Moorhen by its larger size, the latter being thirteen inches in length, the Coot eighteen inches, but the chief characteristic is the white bald patch on the forehead, which has earned for the bird the title of Bald-headed Coot. Underneath, the parts are sooty-black; above, slate-grey with a thin white bar across the wing; legs and feet dark green.

The food consists of worms, slugs, insects of every description, and various vegetable matter.

The nest is composed of dead and decaying stems and leaves of various aquatic plants and often assumes somewhat bulky proportions. It is placed among reeds and rushes, or on the ground among the mud, and again, almost floating on the water.

From seven to ten eggs are laid, which are dingy buff or stone colour, with minute spots of dark brown.

Several broods are reared during the season, and it breeds from May onwards.

XV.—CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*).

ON first acquaintance with the Cormorant—or Isle of Wight Parson as it is called on the little green isle at the southern part of our country—the observer is struck with its apparent ugliness and its ungainly attitude, but on closer inspection it improves in our estimation.

In its breeding habits the Cormorant is disgusting, yet it is stated that it makes a most desirable pet, and when kept in captivity evinces considerable powers of intelligence, tameness and sagacity. It is a common resident around the coasts of Britain, as well as on some inland waters.

Some of its local names, which are many, are Cole Goose, Gormer, Sea Crow, Scart, Green Cormorant, Parson, Great Corvorant, etc.

To admire the bird most, one must see it diving and swimming after fish and eels, which go to ease its voracious appetite. It possesses an enormous “swallow” and will bolt a fish as much as fourteen inches long! As the bird is seen submerged in the sea—now rising, now almost underneath—sinking deeper and deeper, when alarmed, until all but the head is lost to view—and then

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afterwards observed standing in a curious, awkward manner on the top of some rock, one can hardly believe it is the same bird which but a short time before had been seen diving so powerfully after its finny victims. There, on the rock, stands the bird, flapping and spreading out its wings to dry, then perfectly erect and without a motion.

Cormorants are gregarious, and breed in communities, the same habitats being resorted to year by year.

The nest is in the form of a rounded pillar, and is composed of seaweed, dead grass and sticks. The nests are often built so close to each other as to almost touch, but at all times the birds are of a very sociable and agreeable disposition. When found by the sea the structure is placed in the ledges of cliffs and the like, and when inland, on the ground or in trees. It breeds in April, May and June.

The eggs number from three to five, and are pale blue-green when first laid, but like those of many other sea and water birds, they soon become stained, and are invariably found to be thickly encrusted with a whitish chalky substance. The surroundings during the breeding season, as has been already alluded to, are of a filthy description, and the nest is always wet and decidedly objectionable. The young birds, too, are somewhat repulsive looking and are born blind.

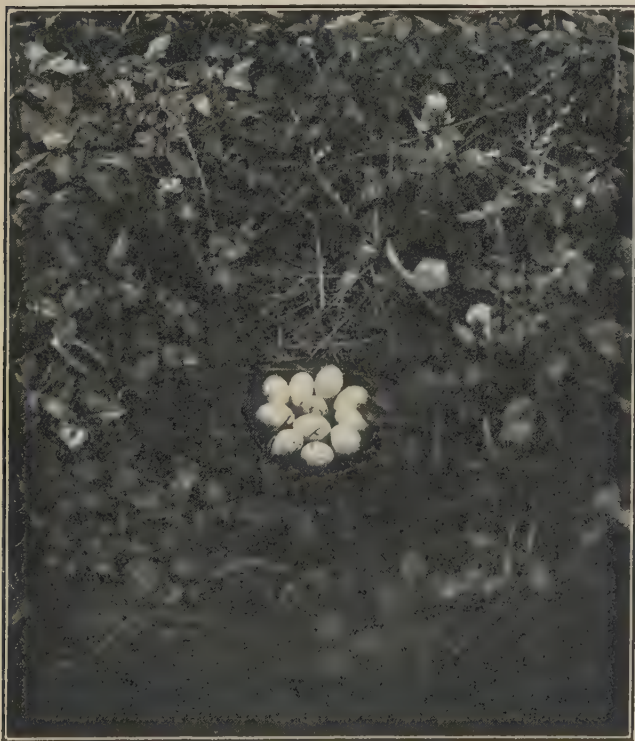
Upper head and neck black, striated with hair-like white feathers, those on the occiput being elongated, and forming a crest in spring; white throat; gular pouch yellow; mantle black and bronze-brown; all other parts are black with the exception of a white patch on the thigh, which is assumed early in the springtime and lost during the summer. The female is brighter than her mate, has a longer crest, and is larger. Length, three feet.

XVI.—CRAKE, CORN (*Crex pratensis*).

THIS is a summer visitor, arriving some time during April, although a few individuals are said to remain with us throughout the year. The flight, being laboured and heavy, affords us food for reflection as to how the bird performs its migratory movements, moreover, it is well-known

Corncrake

that when here it is more often heard than seen, and it is with difficulty that the bird is made to leave the ground. It spends the winter in Algeria, Egypt, Asia Minor and Palestine. I know of no bird, at least so far as Britain is



NEST AND EGGS OF CORNCRAKE.

concerned, which appears to be in its element so much as the bird before us. Its very structure and bearing stamp it as fleet of foot, able to cover great distances in a truly wonderful short space of time. Who has not heard the well-known "crex-crex," now close at hand, the next moment hardly audible owing to the distance the bird has

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travelled? Many times I have rubbed two stones together and thus called the bird right up to the fringe of the hayfield, the tall stems moving to right and left as the Corncrake came towards me.

The note is harsh and grating, but not by any means unpleasant. It is uttered for hours at a stretch and does not seem to tire the bird in the least. The fleetness of the bird results in his being termed an excellent ventriloquist, a fact already alluded to.

This bird is one which every landowner should encourage, for a more beneficial one perhaps is not to be found amongst the whole 177 which now breed in our country. The food consists of snails, slugs, weed seeds, frogs, small lizards, insects, moths, caterpillars, mice, worms, grubs, etc., whilst the little harm, if any, is done during April to July, when the bird takes vegetable substances. But what a number of obnoxious and injurious pests it destroys! and the fact of its having as many as eight or ten young must also be borne in mind. Among others that may be mentioned, the bird eradicates a great quantity of antler moths which are very injurious to grass, and the grubs of which are most destructive to large tracts of land.

The nest is placed in a slight depression in the ground, generally in meadow grass or in a field of standing corn, but I have found it in a hedge bank among tangled grasses. A little dry grass and leaves are used, with fine grasses as a lining.

From seven to ten eggs are laid, whilst more than a dozen have been recorded, and these are reddish-white in ground colour, with blotches of reddish-brown, and underlying markings of ash-grey. A few spots may also be found; some writers say the eggs are "spotted and speckled," but all those which I have seen are best described as "blotched." It breeds the end of May or in June.

The Corncrake is about the size of our Common Partridge, indeed, it resembles that bird in more than one particular. It has patches of ash-grey above the eyes and on the cheeks; the upper parts are yellowish-brown with darker markings; quills and wing-coverts dark chestnut; white throat; greyish-buff breast; belly white towards the middle, whilst the flanks are marked or barred with brown and buff. Length, eleven inches.

Spotted Crake

XVII.—CRAKE, SPOTTED (*Porzana maruetta*).

OWING to the recluse habits of the Spotted Gallinule, Spotted Water-hen, Skitty, Spotted Rail, or Lesser Spotted Water-rail, provincial names given to this bird, not a great deal is known respecting it. Even those observers to whom we might look with confidence for a lucid description, give it but passing notice in a dozen lines or so.

It is a summer visitor, arriving during April, and appears to be restricted to the eastern and southern counties. At the same time, it may be more abundant than is generally supposed, for it often escapes attention. It winters in Africa and India.

Marsh lands and the borders of small streams are the situations in which the bird is found, especially where reeds and rushes abound, which afford it excellent cover for concealment. The food probably consists of worms, insects and other ingredients, after the manner of the Crake last dealt with.

The nest is composed of various aquatic herbage, such as reeds, rushes, sedges, flags, etc., and often assumes large proportions, whilst it has a neat lining of finer examples of similar materials. It is placed on wet ground, or hillocks in marshy and boggy quarters. The lower part of the nest is often very wet, but the cup-shaped centre is dry.

The eight to ten eggs are olive-brown or buff in ground colour, with dark reddish-brown spots and underlying markings of ashy-grey.

Mr C. L. Hett describes the note in his admirable and useful little compilation *A Dictionary of Bird Notes* thus: Call, "whëoo-whëoo" (whistle-like), "whint-whint"; "whit" (clear), or "crrrick" (shrill and whistle-like). Defiance, "chack" (short and sharp).

It is a very small bird, weighing only four ounces, and is nine inches in length. Olive-brown, spotted with white, is the colouring above; crown, dark brown; face and neck, dull grey; breast, brown spotted with white; bill, yellowish-green, the base orange-red; legs, pale green.

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XVIII.—CREEPER, TREE (*Certhia familiaris*)

THIS species brings us to a bird with which we are on much more intimate terms, and which is known a good deal more than the species last under consideration, indeed, it is called in some districts the Familiar Creeper.



TREE CREEPER ($\frac{1}{2}$ Natural Size).

Patience is a virtue, and I have spent many hours in watching the curious antics of this mouse-like little bird. To observe the bird carefully and minutely, one must search for it before the foliage is on the trees—February is an excellent time for such a proceeding—and bird life not being by any means plentiful inland during the second month of the year, the Tree Creeper steps in and fills up the erstwhile gap very nicely.

It is a glorious February morn, the breezes blow a soft

Tree Creeper

lullaby through the tall firs and spreading oaks; the morn is tempered with fitful gleams of summer-like sunshine. Suddenly a tap and then a scamper are heard. The observer is on the look out, and the bird now receiving attention is seen climbing the trunk or branches with much agility. The little feathered creature never seems to tire or to grow weary of its somewhat monotonous occupation, and appears as diligent as ever in its search for insects and their larvæ after an hour's incessant work as when it first started. The unobservant person who is with us cannot see the bird for a time and has considerable difficulty in following its movements, and even when it does catch his untrained eye he fancies it is a mouse rather than a bird. Watch him now as he ascends—by jerks—tapping as he goes and using his microscopic eyes to much advantage. Suddenly, as we stand watching, the Creeper, for a creeper in the strictest sense he is all the year round, drops to the bottom of another tree, for he has reached the smooth branches, where the lurking insects are not to be found as in the rougher texture of the bark. He darts in a slanting manner through the air, and it needs a keen eye to follow him in all his curious and quick motions. Up again he proceeds, and that tree finished, on again and again, never ceasing. The long tail and claws aid the bird considerably in its work—climbing.

“As round the intervening tree
Mouse-like in size and act he steals,
The tree's impending trunk conceals
His back in sober tawny drest,
Wings streaked with brown, and silvery breast.”

All the time he is at work a note is uttered, not at all of an unpleasant description, somewhat after the manner of “tree, tree, tree” in a querulous key, whilst the alarm-note is a crisp “cheep, cheep.” The three or four notes may best be described as of a shrill character, and are usually uttered during the pairing season.

It does no harm, and on this account, perhaps, and also owing to its quick and agile movements, is not persecuted, and it is pleasing to state that the species is found pretty generally in almost any wood where trees of a rough texture abound. It may eat a few seeds, but these are mostly those of wild plants.

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It breeds from April onwards, and the nest is placed in the hole of a tree—in a decayed cavity—behind a piece of loosened or forward growing bark, and also, it is stated, in a crevice in a building.

It is composed of pieces of dead wood, twigs, strips of bark, and grass, and inside, feathers, roots and moss, with a lining of fine strips of inside bark.

The eggs are said by some writers to be indistinguishable from those of some of the Tits and Willow Warblers, but I have seen a great many scarcely distinguishable from some varieties of the Common Wren. These number from six to nine, and are white, spotted and speckled with reddish-brown, mostly at the larger end.

Yellowish-brown, dark brown, and white above, with a pale streak over the eye. Breast and throat buff-white, finishing off dusky on the belly; brown wings with white tips and bars of the same, together with brown and dull yellow. The tail-feathers are reddish-brown, and admirably constructed so as to aid the bird in its climbing and clinging attitudes, being stiff and pointed.

It is one of the smallest of our native birds, being only five inches in length.

XIX.—CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*).

It is refreshing to know that this bird seems to be increasing as a British breeding species. The majority of those which visit us during the autumn leave us again at the approach of spring, but some of the birds are resident in our island. During July, 1898, flocks of Crossbills were seen in Somersetshire which were very fond of resorting to the cider mills and feeding on the waste from the luscious drink, being especially fond of apple pips. Their curious crossed bill, however, serves the bird well in cracking the cones of firs and various seeds. They are also very fond of fruit, as has already been mentioned. They climb and cling, parrot-like, round the limbs and branches of trees, and are most interesting birds to watch.

The peculiarity with regard to this interesting family of Aves is of course the extraordinary form of the bill. In all other birds the beak invariably fits equally when closed, whether it be hooked, flat, straight, curved,

Crossbill

or otherwise, but the Crossbill's peculiarity is all its own.

It is a beautifully plumaged bird, but another remark-



CROSSBILLS ($\frac{2}{3}$ Natural Size).

Female on left, Male on right.

able fact with regard to it is the changes it undergoes in its dress. Hudson says:—"These are birds of the sombre pine woods, inhabiting high latitudes ; but in their various greens and reds and yellows they are like Tanagers and other tropical families, and form an exception to the rule that birds of brilliant plumage are restricted to regions of brilliant sunlight." The tail-feathers and those

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of the wings are brown; whilst the other parts are yellow, green, orange, and tile-red, which varies according to age and sex. Extraordinary to relate, in its wild state the full-grown male is red, but when kept in captivity it is yellow. It is six inches and a half in length.

The Crossbill is no singer, if we except a low warble by both sexes, yet the call—perhaps love-song is a better definition of a bird's voice such as this—is loud and shrill. Mr Hett has likened it to “chip-chip-chip,” “gip-gip-gip,” “twit-twit,” “tsip, tsip,” “psit,” and “soe-soe,” or “tsoe, tsoe.” Otherwise “si-si-si.” When on the wing the call is somewhat similar to that of Linnets and Finches.

Pine and fir trees are the situations generally chosen as a nesting site, sometimes a few feet from the ground within reach, at others, as high as fifty feet. Among the high branching twigs it is perhaps more generally to be found. The outside of the nest consists of roots, twigs and dry grass, with an inner weaving of hair, wool and feathers.

Four or five eggs are laid, white, tinged very often with green, and spotted with reddish-brown, with underlying markings of a paler shade.

The Crossbill is a very early breeder, like the Raven, the nest often being ready for the reception of its contents during the early part of February.

XX.—CROW, CARRION (*Corvus corone*).

PROBABLY not one person in a hundred knows the difference between a Rook and a Crow, and the notions which one hears as to the supposed differences are certainly amusing. The Carrion Crow may be distinguished from its near relative, the Rook, in more than one particular. The flight somewhat resembles that of the Rook it is true, but is, if anything, heavier; the Crow is restricted to three “caws” uttered consecutively, whilst the Rook is not restricted to any number; the Rook may be distinguished from the present species by the bald patch immediately behind the beak; instead of the base of the beak being bald, as in the Rook, it is clothed with feathers; the Crow is larger by about an inch in length. Further, Carrion Crows are not seen in such large flocks as Rooks, more than three or four seldom being seen in company.

Carrion Crow

There is one more difference which must be mentioned, and that is, the Crow is a pilferer and a thief, and does not, perhaps, do more good than harm, whilst the Rook is an unspeakable blessing to the agriculturist.



CARRION CROW ($\frac{1}{5}$ Natural Size).

From an admirable article in the *Glasgow Herald* I quote the following extract:—

“The Crow is worth more than a passing glance in relation to March. Like the Sparrow—and the poor—he

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is 'always with us,' but he is more noticeable during this month than when the earth is radiant in the pageant of summer. He is a grand old fellow; a social democrat, if you will, but an altogether earnest, sober-minded, serious bird. He is diligent in business, and therefore possesses the first essential for 'standing before kings.' No matter how early you are afoot, his sable majesty has anticipated you, on his way to join the labourers in the fields. He is, in truth, the field-labourer amongst the feathered tribes, and, like his human mate, he is homely in his manners, modest in his demands, and possesses a rough kind of humour which birds of finer feathers neither know nor could appreciate. And if he, at times, changes his 'diet of worms,' for some of Burnbrae's toothsome young potatoes, the fellow, and his wife and family up in the elms, must live; and in the interests of those at home he is ready to risk net or gun—which is more than can be said of many a featherless biped!"

It must not be thought, however, that no good is done by this bird, for the carrion he devours saves us in some places from pestilence—especially near the seashore where various garbage has been stranded; in the pasture lands I have seen him diligently searching for worms and grubs, and he also feeds on berries, seeds and fruit. It is during the time the young game are about that he appears to do most mischief, for then the young Pheasants and other game birds, and the young of the poultry yard suffer, and the ranks are somewhat thinned; young wild birds are also taken.

It may be that, after all, the good done counterbalances the harm, for it should be noted that it does not have young to cater for all the year round, and when the nesting season is over it is rare that it touches anything but carrion, worms, grubs, etc. Moreover, young Pheasants and poultry are only obtainable at certain seasons.

A London paper is responsible for the following comments and quotation. Such wholesale destruction is simply deplorable:—

"It is stated in one of the papers 'that Mr John Riddell, Ruik, near Selkirk, reported that the Crow Committee of the Farmers' Club for the district had fired off no less than 10,000 cartridges, killing 20,000 young Crows and 350 old ones.' The figures may be right, but

Hooded Crow

the ornithology is rather weak. A Crow's a Crow, and a Rook's a Rook."¹

I feel constrained to say with Canon Jessop:—

"I should also like to shoot a stray gamekeeper now and then; but the absurdity of the law goes the length of actually protecting the gamekeeper from slaughter, while it leaves the infinitely rarer and more beautiful winged creatures, which are a joy to the eyes and hearts of most of us, to be the victims of every brutal fool who finds a pleasure in killing. May we hope that by some action of our Society (*i.e.*, the Society for the Protection of Birds)—sooner or later, and before the millennium comes—we may find some gentle methods for keeping down the number of the Sparrows, and putting restraints upon the gamekeepers? Something—surely something—would be gained by teaching the gamekeepers why it is that we do *not* love the Sparrows, and on the other hand, why it is that every man, woman and child among us ought to love and cherish every other bird that flies in this our island."

During the summer months the Carrion Crow is very solitary in habits, but at other seasons of the year is somewhat gregarious in disposition and may be seen among a few Rooks or the ever-increasing Jackdaws.

The nest is sometimes placed in large trees in woods and plantations, but in districts where there are hills it is built on rocky cliffs, and the same structure is used for years. It thus assumes large proportions, and consists of sticks, weeds, etc., plastered with mud, clay, or cow dung, with a lining of leaves, wool, fine grass, hair and feathers.

The four to six eggs are pale bluish-green, blotched and spotted with different shades of olive brown and underlying markings of perhaps ash-grey. It breeds during April and May.

The plumage is black with green and violet reflections; the lower part of the beak is covered with bristly feathers, and the iris is dark hazel. It is nineteen inches long.

XXI.—CROW, HOODED (*Corvus cornix*).

THIS species, known also as the Hooded, Royston, Saddle-back, or Grey Crow, cannot possibly be mistaken for its last-mentioned relative, or the Rook, because of its general

¹ Rooks are often called Crows (or "Craws") in Scotland, hence it is that the former, and not the latter, birds are referred to.

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ashy-grey plumage. The head, throat, tail and wings are black, the remainder of the plumage ash-grey; iris brown; it is about half an inch longer than the bird last under consideration.

The bird now receiving attention closely resembles the Carrion Crow in its voice and habits, and what I have stated with regard to the Carrion species applies in almost every particular to this bird.

It is more common perhaps in Ireland than in England, Scotland or Wales, yet it is found in all four parts of our country. It is said that during the winter months flocks of these Crows from Northern Europe visit the east coast of England, where they resort to the mud flats—especially in Lincolnshire—and feed upon the shell-fish and various kinds of refuse cast up by the sea.

The nest and eggs are precisely similar to the bird last described, although it should be stated that in some districts, where trees and cliffs are scarce, low trees and bushes, only a few feet from the ground, are resorted to.

XXII.—CUCKOO (*Cuculus canorus*).

EVERYBODY, almost, has heard the welcome call of “Kook-oo, Kook-oo” in early April, and almost everyone in the country anxiously waits to draw first blood. But everybody is not acquainted any further with the bird’s mysterious life and habits other than that it cries “Kook-oo,” that it is with us only during the summer, and that it lays its eggs in some other bird’s nest.

The bird may generally be looked for in the British Isles about the middle of April, and those people who are continually sending silly records to the papers of its appearance in February and March, might note this with advantage. A few well authenticated instances of its appearance in our country towards the end of March have been forthcoming, but, generally speaking, it is rarely heard or seen previous to the end of the first week in April. It winters in Central Africa and Southern India, for which parts of the world it quits our shores towards the end of August, although young birds of the year often stay later.

The Cuckoo is one of the very few polygamous birds in the British Isles, and as to the reason why the bird chooses to hand over the care of its young to foster-parents, some naturalists assert that the construction of the bird does

Cuckoo

not allow it to sit on a nest, but this appears a very unlikely reason, and there is still much to be learned in this respect.

As to the number of eggs laid by one female, opinions differ. Some say half a dozen, others as many as a score, the laying season extending for a period of about six



YOUNG CUCKOO IN NEST OF CHAFFINCH.

weeks. Probably, if the latter number be halved, we are somewhat nearer the correct solution.

Extraordinary indeed are the nests chosen wherein to lay its egg—according to Mr Bidwell's list there are nearly 120 known species. I have always found the Hedge Sparrow more than any other bird to be charged with the rearing of the great sprawling youngster, and I well remember one lucky day in Bedfordshire finding half a

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dozen of these nests in one morning, each containing an egg of the Cuckoo. Other favourite foster-parents are the Robin, Meadow Pipit, Whitethroat, Reed Warbler and Pied Wagtail.

The egg is laid on the ground, and carried to the selected nest in the bird's beak, not in the claws as has been erroneously stated. It is the smallest egg laid by any British bird in comparison to its size, being very little larger than a House Sparrow's, or perhaps, almost the size of a Skylark's. In its colouring the egg varies a good deal, and pages might be devoted to this point alone. In the collection at South Kensington there are three varieties of blue Cuckoo's eggs which were laid in the nests of the Hedge Sparrow, Redstart and Pied Flycatcher, all of which lay blue eggs! The colour of the egg certainly is, in a great many instances, almost, if not quite, identical with the bird upon whom the Cuckoo has thrust its charge, but I have yet to find one of these blue varieties. The general colour, however, is white, closely freckled and mottled with grey, or sometimes reddish-brown, and in all those specimens which have come under my notice, a few black specks or dots were noticeable.

When the young Cuckoo is hatched, an apt illustration of the survival of the fittest is supplied to us, for no matter whether there be eggs or young of its foster-parents in the nest, both, or either, are ejected, the eggs by means of the hollow in the back, which serves as a natural egg-cup, and the young birds by means of the wedge-shaped rump and large wings. This very extraordinary habit is only carried out during the first few days of the young Cuckoo's life—indeed, whilst it is quite blind—and I am able to record an authentic account of what really happens. The following notes are taken from my little brochure entitled *The Early Life of the Young Cuckoo*. They relate to a series of experiments carried out by my friend, Mr John Craig, Beith, Ayrshire, who, owing to his well-directed enthusiasm, patience, care, knowledge of his subject and whole-heartedness, has placed bird lovers under a deep obligation to him, and, as Dr Japp says in his book on the Cuckoo, "whom all the world will thank for so far decisively setting this matter at rest."

On June 2, 1899, Mr Craig found a Meadow Pipit's nest containing two Cuckoo's eggs and three Pipit's. One of the latter eggs was broken by my friend to ascertain

Cuckoo

how far incubation had advanced, so that he would know about when to return to resume his observations.

A diversity of opinion arises as to whether the two eggs were deposited in the one nest by the same Cuckoo, but the opinion of Mr Craig, and also of the writer, is that they were deposited by different Cuckoos. The eggs varied in colour, size and shape.

It is rare that the Meadow Pipit lays a clutch of eggs numbering less than four, and this being so it is reasonable to suppose that the Cuckoo (or Cuckoos) when depositing the eggs had taken away one or more of the Pipit's, leaving five in all, that is, including the two Cuckoo's eggs.

On June 6, the eggs were still unhatched, but two days later both the Cuckoos were out of the shells, and one of the Pipit's eggs was found lying outside the nest, and the other remaining egg of the Pipits (as Mr Craig had already broken one of the eggs only two remained) was also missing; probably it had been turned out of the nest by one of the young Cuckoos and carried away by the parents.

The two young Cuckoos appeared at first to be quite happy together, but a struggle of extraordinary violence was soon commenced between the two birds. What was apparently the stronger bird of the two got what was evidently the weaker on its back and strained every muscle to hoist it to the top of the nest, while the other was holding on to the nest with its claws for all it was worth. After a severe struggle, they both became exhausted and went to the bottom of the nest, but after a short respite the battle was again commenced time after time, each bird fighting most strenuously.

On visiting the nest on June 9, one of the Cuckoos was found outside the nest. Before placing it back again a young Pipit was secured and put in the nest. The Cuckoo in the nest hoisted the Pipit again and again on its back and climbed up the side of the nest backwards with it, but the Pipit always got jammed near the top. The other Cuckoo was then put in again and a desperate struggle was witnessed. Sometimes the birds put their bills and heads against the opposite side of the nest when commencing to climb, to get more pressure. Several times the top bird tumbled over the head of the other, like a rider falling over the head of a horse. The birds, being

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somewhat exhausted, had a short rest, but they soon became extremely restless and again commenced the struggle.

It was unfortunate that, although snapshots were taken of these avine battles, they all proved useless, the birds fighting at such a terrible rate, resulting in the plate revealing merely an unintelligible "blurr." The following day (June 10) one of the Cuckoos was again found outside the nest. It was placed back again, when the Cuckoo in possession of the nest began to hoist the other on its back, climbed up the side of the nest backwards, and threw it out. This it had little difficulty in doing as the one found outside the nest had become weak through want of food. After this the weak bird was placed in the nest to give it a chance to recover, and the stronger one was taken away for about an hour. On returning, the bird was put back into the nest again, whereupon the weak bird made several attempts to eject its stronger companion, but without effect, as it was far too weak. It then acted on the defensive by lying in a canted position by keeping the side that was next its opponent downward, one of its legs and claws being stretched out against the opposite side of the nest, to try and prevent its opponent from getting under it. The nest was then bolstered up to give the weak bird a chance to recover, but on June 11 the weak bird had disappeared altogether! The foster-parents paid no attention to the young Cuckoo when it was outside the nest, although the bird was frequently sitting on the side of it.

Thus far no photographs of any value had been secured. Not to be outwitted, Mr Craig procured a young Yellow Bunting, which was admirably suited for his purpose. This he placed, on June 12, in the nest beside the sole remaining occupant, *i.e.*, the strongest young Cuckoo. After a few minutes' delay, the Cuckoo hoisted the Yellow Bunting on its back, climbed up the side of the nest backwards, and shot the bird over the nest! The young Bunting was put back into the nest several times, but the Cuckoo repeated the operation on each occasion.

Six snapshots were taken at various stages, and two of them were most successful, showing the young Cuckoo in the very act of ejecting the young Yellow Bunting. These photographs are reproduced in the book from which these notes are taken. By this time the Cuckoo was five or six days old, the Yellow Bunting about three or four.

Cuckoo

The nest was then stretched out (it should be stated that the nest of the Meadow Pipit is built on the ground), to try and save the young Yellow Bunting, but on visiting the nest the following day (June 13) the bird was found lying dead outside.

The next visit was paid on June 17, when a young Hedge Sparrow was placed in the nest to see what further performances would take place, but by this time the Cuckoo had received its sight; the two birds sat quite contentedly together, and the following day (June 18) they were still living quite amicably. On June 19 both birds were progressing very rapidly, and it seems strange that the young Cuckoo, who would not allow anything to be beside it only a few days previously, now permitted a young bird to live in harmony with it. When the young Hedge Sparrow was put into the nest it would be about eight days old and the Cuckoo ten or eleven days.

About the same time as the above-mentioned incidents took place, Mr Craig found another Cuckoo's egg in a Meadow Pipit's nest, and this bird when hatched ejected all the four Pipit's eggs, one of them being thrown out when the bird was not twenty-four hours old. One of the photographs taken reveals the young Cuckoo with the egg in the hollow of its back in the very act of throwing it out of the nest. The hollow in the back fills up when the bird is about twelve days old.

The back of the young Cuckoo is broad considering its size, and it makes considerable use of its wings and muscular legs in steadying the bird on its back, and to prevent it from rolling into the nest again, as well as in examining, as it were, a bird or an egg in the nest.

It is a popular belief in Norfolk that whatever you are doing the first time you hear the Cuckoo you will do the most frequently all the year. Another belief is that an unmarried person will remain single as many years as the Cuckoo, when first heard, utters its call. Milton says in his sonnet to the Nightingale:—

“Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow Cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love.”

Heywood, in his epigram “Of Use” (1587), thus alludes to the remarkable change of note in the Cuckoo:—

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“ In April, the Koocoo can sing her song by note ;
In June, of tune she cannot sing a note ;
At first, koocoo, koocoo, sing still can she do ;
At last kooke, kooke, kooke—six kookes to one koocoo.”

In conclusion : the Cuckoo is of great benefit in the number of caterpillars it destroys, especially the hairy ones. The food is entirely insectivorous, consisting, besides the insects already mentioned, of beetles, lepidopterous insects and larvæ.

But does the feathered lives (generally insectivorous ones) which are sacrificed, result in a balance being struck in the bird's favour ? I think it does.

The bird is often mistaken for a Hawk and is thus persecuted. Small birds too are often seen flying after it. Do they actually mistake it for a Hawk, or are they angry because of the bird's habit of placing under their care its unruly offspring ?

The only local names known to me are those of Cog, Gowk, and Grey Cuckoo.

The upper parts are bluish-ash, somewhat of a darker character on the wings, but lighter on the neck and breast ; whitish, with transverse dusky streaks, underneath ; quills barred on the inner webs with white oval spots ; blackish tail-feathers, tipped and spotted with white. The beak is dusky, with a yellow edging ; orbits and inside of mouth yellow ; iris and feet same colour. The young are ash-brown, barred with reddish-brown ; the tips of feathers are white, and there is a white spot on the back of the head. Length, thirteen and a half inches.

XXIII.—CURLEW, COMMON (*Numenius arquata*).

OFTEN on a quiet night by the sea the curious cries of a small company of Curlews returning from their feeding grounds on the sand flats, may be heard, and during the summer how interesting it is to watch it on its breeding grounds inland, and Seebohm very accurately describes its distribution at this season as “ similar to that of the Red Grouse and Ring Ouzel.” There is a small company of males on the south coast, and not a great distance away, a small congregation of females, which never breed ! How is this to be explained ? This is not the only instance

Stone Curlew

either which has been brought to the notice of naturalists as to this peculiarity. Hudson calls them "unpaired or non-breeding" birds, which remain by the sea all through the summer months.

The Curlew is one of the most wary and artful birds. He acts amongst other birds as a sentinel in the same manner as does the Jay in the woodland. Moreover, the bird now before us not only seems desirous of the safety of his relatives, but of all those wild creatures who are within hearing of his warning signal. He is vigilant, alert, cunning and intelligent.

Waste moors and hilly uplands are the bird's breeding resorts, where its voice seems more weird and fascinating than by the seashore or sand or mud flats.

The nest is a mere depression in the ground on open moorlands, usually somewhat sheltered by a tuft of grass, rushes or heather. Very few materials are used, perhaps a few dead grasses, rushes, sedge leaves, or a few heather twigs, and often none at all.

Three or four eggs only are laid, rather large, and these are olive-green in ground colour, spotted and blotched with dark brown and dusky-green. It breeds during the latter part of April or beginning of May.

This bird derives its English name from the nature of its voice, and Mr Hett has very correctly stated it as follows:—"Call, 'curlee' (shrill), 'cur-l-ooë.' Flight, 'tutuo' (harsh). On wing, at breeding stations, cry (long, musical and rattling, *approaching a song*), never heard at other times. Believed to be uttered by male only."

The food consists of small crabs, and marine insects and worms.

The general plumage is reddish-ash, mottled with dusky spots; almost white belly, with streaks of a dusky order; white rump and tail-coverts; tail-feathers barred with dark brown. The female is the larger of the two, measuring twenty-one to twenty-six inches.

XXIV.—CURLEW, STONE (*Edicnemus scolopax*).

I HAVE recently received information from a well-authenticated source that this bird, Great Plover, Norfolk Plover, or Thicknee—which is only a summer visitor to our island, although some observers state that a few birds are found

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with us all the year round—is decidedly on the increase in certain wild spots in the country, and in a recent issue of the *Field* the occurrence is recorded of one having been seen on a bare hill to the north of Epping. During the winter it is found in Temperate Europe, Northern Africa, and South-western Asia.

It somewhat resembles the last bird dealt with in the matter of plumage, and owing to its partiality for a sandy or stony soil, the name given to the bird of Stone Curlew



NEST AND EGGS OF STONE CURLEW.

is very aptly fitted for it. Thickknee too is not at all far fetched, nor is indeed Great Plover, for it is the sole representative of its family in our country, or, I think I am safe in saying, in Europe.

Walking along over some stony ground, on commons, downs and warrens, the rambler may stumble across this most interesting spring migrant, but not often during the daytime, for the reason that it is nocturnal in its habits, feeding by night for the most part and crouching during the day. When one is fortunate enough to light upon the bird in the daytime he may congratulate himself on

Stone Curlew

his good fortune. Carefully watching the bird through a field-glass one sees those great yellow eyes which shine like crystal. It squats on the ground with neck extended when endeavouring to avoid detection, and sometimes owing to the similarity of the bird's plumage to the surroundings and the colour of its eggs, one may stumble across either, quite unexpectedly.

Mr Trevor-Battye has given a very delightful account of the bird's nesting habits, and he remarks that a pair he



YOUNG STONE CURLEW.

watched on a gravelly space among some pines were exceedingly interesting and wary, and that "it was interesting to notice that the bird always rose backwards from the nest, so that its long legs should not disturb the eggs; and that the new-comer (for both birds aid in the work of incubation) did not turn the eggs immediately, but squatted perfectly still for perhaps a minute, as if to make sure it was not disturbed." The distribution of this species in

Note.—The young Curlew depicted above was placed on a handkerchief and photographed in that position to more clearly show the habit of the bird—even at such a tender age—of crouching and remaining still. A young Lapwing, or any other similar bird, would not have remained still long enough to enable a photo to be taken.

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our country is stated to be Norfolk and Suffolk, from Hampshire and Dorsetshire in the south, to the Lincolnshire wolds and the East Riding of Yorkshire in the north.

This bird is of much service to the agriculturist and horticulturist, and it does not appear to suffer from persecution to any appreciable extent.

The food consists of worms, slugs and insects, and it is also fond of small reptiles and mice. So far as is known, no harm whatever is perpetrated.

I have mentioned where the bird breeds—a mere hollow scratched in the ground, with occasionally a few grass bents, serving as a nest—or among the pebbles or stones, and the eggs only number two. These are of a buff ground colour, streaked and spotted with brown and grey. It breeds in May or June.

The sexes are similar, the beak being black, yellowish at the base; irides, orbits, legs and feet yellow; pale brown above; white tips on wing-coverts, forming two narrow bars; quill black; throat and stripe under the eye white; neck and breast buff with streaks of dark brown. Length, seventeen inches.

XXV.—DIPPER (*Cinclus aquaticus*).

RAMBLING by the side of some stream, perchance by some mountain side, for it is in Scotland, Ireland and Wales where it mostly abounds, though found also in England, one lights upon this white-bellied Wren, for it resembles our pretty little Brown Wren in its upturned tail, form, and sprightly movements. By the rivulet, the Water Ouzel, Water Thrush, or Water Pyet, three local names for the bird, is in its element, and here amidst such peaceful surroundings it is seen in all its beauty. It appears to stand out alone—distinct from every other British breeding bird, the Brown Wren being the sole species with which it can be compared, but the Dipper is much larger in size, has a white throat and belly, the other parts being black or blackish-brown, and Hudson very aptly describes it as “a big black Wren with a silvery white bib.” It is six and a half inches in length. How picturesque is the bird as it alights on some fallen boulder in a rapid rushing mountain torrent, and stands there motionless in the sunlight, and what delightful surroundings are these!

Suddenly the bird darts off up stream, and again settles

Dipper

on another boulder or other fissure in the rocky glen, and then perhaps on again until he has reached the extent of his chosen range, for like the Robin he chooses a certain limit and seldom wanders far from it. He is not like the Kingfisher, up and down stream with no restricted range—he keeps to his own selected spot, and invariably returns to the situation from which he started when disturbed.

Some of the habits of this bird are not so well known as we could wish; for instance, its habit of diving and searching for, and devouring, its food under water. The very structure of the bird does not seem suited for such exploitations, but competent observers have placed same on record, and to all appearances the bird does possess this curious peculiarity, and seems to delight in it too. I have seen the bird near the water's edge as if drinking of the crystal liquid, or bathing, or as it stands on some rocky projection in mid-stream, snatching an insect from near the surface, but have yet to see its Grebe-like diving and feeding underneath. The waters, too, must be as clear as crystal, for the food of the bird necessitates this. If it were not so, it would be perhaps difficult for it to obtain the various aquatic insects upon which it exists, such as the larvæ of dragon flies, water beetles, and others, these being so wonderfully adapted by the wonder-working hand of Nature to the character of the surroundings, that even the cultivated eye of the naturalist gazing into the waters may not see the life which is being lived by hundreds of minute creatures below the surface. The plumage of the bird has been already sufficiently described; it only remains for me to add in this direction that the colours of the female bird are more dingy than those of her mate, to whom she always appears to be much attached.

It surprises many people to know that this water bird, for one must, I suppose, call it such, seeing that it is very rarely found away from the water, sings such a pretty little melody, and this not only during the spring and summer months. On a winter's morning, when all is frost bound and the hills are covered with snow, the little creature seems cheered at the transient gleam, and opens his heart in the midst of the mountain solitude, with naught to hear him, perhaps, but the hills which send back his joyous message. The song is not of long duration, but what there is of it is very sweet, and curious to relate, somewhat like the notes of the Wren.

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Among the fissures in the rocks, banks, caves, crevices, holes, underneath old stone bridges or arches, the beautiful domed nest is generally placed, and is for the most part well hidden from view. It is like a globular ball of moss, of large size, very firmly knit together, with a few feathers and dry leaves inside serving as a lining, a small opening being situated near the base.

The whole life history of this bird is interesting in every particular—in its plumage, song, habits, nest, and even its eggs, for these are of a beautiful white, pointed, measuring 1·0 by ·75 inches, and number from four to six. It breeds from April to June.

XXVI.—DIVER, BLACK-THROATED (*Colymbus arcticus*).

THIS is the first of the two beautiful Divers which are entitled to inclusion in these sketches, the Great Northern Diver being a straggler only. Perhaps neither of our own indigenous Divers may be so beautifully marked as the rarer visitor, yet they are so interesting, and dressed in such exquisite garb, as to call forth our admiration, and we may congratulate ourselves on having two such birds in this country. Much cannot be written of these birds, as they are very rarely seen on land, excepting during the breeding season. It is in the far north that they are found at this season, the coast of Scotland and the Outer Hebrides. To other parts of the kingdom the Black and Red-throated Divers are accidental visitors. As its name implies, this bird delights in diving, and it thus escapes many of its enemies. My friend, Mr Horace Tuppen, tells me that he has followed these oceanic birds for miles on the sea, but all in vain. Even when well within gunshot the Diver is so quick, that it takes a crack shot to do any good, and even when the bird is hit, it does not often prove fatal.

The water is its home—on it or underneath it; it appears to know every move imaginable, and the list of swimming feats is a pretty heavy one. When out at sea one may often come across a Diver whereas only a minute before no bird was to be seen. The moment it sees any danger, however, it is underneath the waves and comes up at a great distance away. It reminds one very much of the Little Grebe when observed in these operations—indeed, in other directions also, is akin to the Grebe family.

Black-throated Diver

One would imagine that the fact of these birds being always on the sea, or nearly so, would result in their being non-suited to flight of any duration, yet they participate during autumn and winter in very long migrations; but it should be added that I have known one or other of this species to be observed at the reservoirs at Tring, Herts, very incapable of flight, and easy of capture. How is this to be explained? Is it because of the legs being placed such a long way back, and the consequent ungainly and awkward movements attendant thereon? The species now receiving attention does not appear to be so fond of the water as the Great Northern Diver, and in the selection of a nesting site it is not so particular as to the distance such site is away from the sea.

The skins of these birds, Montagu says, are used in some countries for various sorts of clothing, and I can well believe it, for the skin is very hard, tough and warm. It is difficult, as I have already stated in passing, to get a shot into the bird at all, even when at close quarters.

As may be expected, the food consists of fish, and it is stated, let us hope incorrectly, that the bird has been taken under water with a baited hook, and has also been captured in fishermen's nets as it has dived after the fish therein entangled; although I have always found the Diver to be a shy and solitary bird, and quite capable of getting fish without taking advantage of the fishermen's haul.

The bird is also called the Northern Doucker, and the Speckled Loon.

Some writers have compared the shrieks or cries of this bird as of a child in distress or of some escaped lunatic, and certain it is that some of the notes uttered are of a very strange and weird character, but let Mr Hett describe them in his own inimitable "language": "Call, 'ak,' 'ork,' or 'ork' (oft repeated), 'deoch; deoch; deoch! tha'n loch a traoghadh'; Anglicè, 'drink-drink-drink, the lake is nearly dried up' (strange and weird), unearthly screams at nesting ground."

The nest, if such it can be called, often consisting as it does of nothing but a few reeds, plant stalks, and the like, and perhaps a little grass inside, is placed on small islands in, or skirting the edges of, solitary lochs and mountain tarns, or, it is said, on the bare shingle not far from the water's edge.

Two eggs are laid, which are very similar to those of

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both the Great Northern Diver and the species which will next claim our attention. They are of a dark olive-brown, spotted here and there with dark umber-brown and black. It breeds in May and June.

It has a black bill and red irides. The crown and hinder part of the head ash-grey; blackish above, with spots and bars of white; purplish-black throat (hence the name Black-throated Diver), with an incomplete ring of white streaks; sides of neck striped with black and white, and the under parts are of the latter. The length is twenty-six inches.

XXVII.—DIVER, RED-THROATED (*Colymbus septentrionalis*).

IN its form, habits and manners this Diver is precisely similar to the bird last dealt with. The Red-throated Diver, however, is the smallest of the three I have noted, that is including the Great Northern, and it seems as if Montagu made a mistake when he gave the length as thirty inches, for the Great Northern, the longest of the three, is only thirty-three inches! The specimen Montagu examined may have been an extra fine one, but I should certainly give the length as somewhere about twenty-three inches only.

The voice resembles that of its Black-throated relative—about which at one time there was some doubt as to its distinctiveness—but I might add “ak-ak-kakara-kakara,” foretelling rain.

The apology for a nest is placed around the edges of mountain lochs, amongst reeds or grass. The two eggs are dark brownish-olive, with very often a tinge of green, spotted with dark umber-brown.

It is mouse-coloured on the head, throat and sides of neck; has a black spotted crown; neck marked with black and white lines; on the front of the neck a large orange-coloured patch (hence Red-throated Diver); dusky brown back, white underneath.

XXVIII.—DOTTEREL (*Endromias morinellus*).

THIS beautiful member of that very interesting and useful family—the Plovers—does not appear to be at all well known outside the districts which it frequents. The artist has a subject here which requires very careful studying

Ring Dove

before he puts his colours on the canvas, and even then he can do but scant justice to such a lovely coloured bird. With its dull white throat; bright chestnut, ash-brown and black on the breast and belly, and a white band on the lower breast; dusky-black crown, margined with white, which extends backwards from the eye round the nape; ash-brown upper parts, and white-tipped tail-feathers and tail-coverts, the bird presents a beautiful appearance and arrests the attention of all who are brought into contact with it. The female bird, contrary to the more usual order of bird life, is not only larger, but richer coloured than her mate. Length, nine inches.

The Dotterel Plover does not appear to be of so shy and recluse a character as others of its family, and old writers assert that it is a foolish bird, and even allows fowlers to take it without offering any resistance.

We do not know the bird in the south as a breeding species; it is in the north of our island that it is found nesting, but before this takes place it resorts to the fallows, pasture lands and heaths, and then makes its way to the mountains and wild moorland places. Here it uses a slight depression in the ground wherein to place its three eggs. These are yellowish-olive, spotted, and blotched with brownish-black. It breeds during May, June and July.

It is a useful bird, and does very little, if any, harm, feeding on various insects, worms, grubs, snails, and the buds and shoots of plants.

It possesses a plaintive call-note, which is uttered variously, and during the pairing season it is prolonged into a sort of trill.

XXIX.—DOVE, RING (*Columba palumbus*).

I SUPPOSE almost everyone knows the Wood Pigeon, by which name this member of the Dove family is far better known, as well as Cushat, Cushat Doo, Ring Pigeon, Luest, Zuist, and so on. Who has not seen these birds in hundreds, aye thousands, phalanx after phalanx, returning to their roost trees in some large wood just before dusk? They travel miles to their favourite roosting trees, some going I believe from Brocket Hall and Ashridge Park, in Hertfordshire, to the woods at Woburn, Beds., regularly every day. In spite of the fact that the Wood Pigeon is

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persecuted, it is increasing. We cannot say this of a great many of our birds, but we can of this one, and yet it lays only two eggs! How then is the increase to be explained? Is it because of its breeding for such a lengthened period? Here I might with advantage insert an extract from an admirable pamphlet written by Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart., entitled, *Fowls of the Air*. He says, writing in 1896:—"Just one hundred and seventy years ago a certain clergyman, the Rev. James Granger, preached a sermon which gave mighty offence to his parishioners. Those were days when few people gave serious thought to the sufferings of what we arrogantly call the lower animals, and it was held to be frivolous, impertinent, and altogether derogatory to the dignity of the Church of England that horses and dogs should be mentioned from the pulpit, and cruelty towards them condemned as contrary to Christian mercy. The most plausible excuse put forward for the parson was that he had gone mad. Howbeit, mad or sane, good parson Granger afterwards published his sermon in the form of a pamphlet, called *An Apology for the Brute Creation; or Abuse of Animals Censured*; and thus the first note was sounded in that agitation which has resulted in our own day in the presence on the Statute Book of some of the most excellent laws ever devised."

The consciousness of protection which this bird possesses is nothing short of extraordinary, for we find its nest in the squares and streets of London and other large cities. One nest built in Fitzroy Square, London, during 1899 came to a sad end, and shows one of the dangers to which they are exposed, and also the daring of the bird who acted the robber. On the 16th May in the year named a Carrion Crow was seen to attack the nest and carry off one of the fledglings. The female bird screamed, but the male, sitting on a tree a little distance off, did not dare to go to her assistance. It is a splendid bird on the wing, but when disturbed flaps its wings violently together and flutters about until it gets out into the open.

This bird is an early and a late breeder, the season being from March right up to November. The nest is placed in tall trees or high hedges, and consists of small dead twigs. It is a mere platform, and is almost flat.

The two white eggs measure 1.65 by 1.25 inches.

The note consists of a "coo" oft repeated.

As regards the food, it cannot be disputed that the



YOUNG RING DOVES.

Rock Dove

farmer has just claims for looking upon this bird, during some part of the year, as an enemy, for it is very destructive to the buds and leaves of young turnips and roots; but its diet is also made up of grain of all kinds, and the farmer forgets the quantity of seeds of the charlock, hemlock, goosegrass, dock, bindweed, plantain, and other obnoxious weeds eaten after harvest. It also eats small snails and worms now and then, and acorns, gooseberries, beech mast, ivy berries, etc.

This is a handsome bird and the largest Dove which we can claim as British. It has a bluish-grey head, violet and green on the sides and back of neck, on each side being a patch of white; grey upper parts, with broad edges of white on wing-coverts which are very conspicuous; tail-feathers dark slaty-grey; reddish-purple underneath, paler on the belly; orange bill, whitish towards the base; feet and legs bright red. Length, seventeen inches.

XXX.—DOVE, ROCK (*Columba livia*).

THIS species, called Blue Dove, Rockler, Rock Pigeon, White-backed Dove, and so on, resorts to those parts of the Scottish coast which are of a rocky character, as several of its names imply, and south of the Tweed the bird is not very well known, although I believe I am correct in stating that it is found in small numbers on the south and east coasts. The natives of St Kilda say that Rock Doves frequenting the islands, cross the sea every day—a distance of seventy miles—to feed at the Hebrides.

The vocal powers are not of a very high order, being similar to those of the better-known bird last dealt with, but with a “roo” introduced amongst the “coos.” When heard amidst the towering and shattered rocks it is a pleasing variation from the incessant din made by hosts of sea birds.

The food consists of seeds and grain, as well as beech mast, leaves of plants, etc. It is extremely partial to some species of testaceous *Limaces*, especially *Helix virgata*, which is found on dry rocky hills.

The nest is composed of dry bents, grass, seaweed, and a few sticks or twigs of heather, and is usually placed on the coast on ledges in rocky caves, or recesses in the face of high cliffs. It breeds in April and May, but the limit is as long as from February to October. All the Doves which

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breed in the British Isles generally lay two eggs only, and all are white. Those of the bird under notice are slightly smaller than those of the Ring Dove, being 1·45 by 1·15 inches.

The plumage is ashy-blue, which is lighter on the wings; white rump; a lustrous neck and breast, with beautiful purple and green reflections; on the wing there are two transverse black bands, whilst the primaries and tail are tipped with the same colour; on the outer web of the outer tail-feathers it is white; iris light orange; black bill; red feet. Length, twelve and a half inches.

XXXI.—DOVE, STOCK (*Columba oenas*).

THIS Dove is called in some localities the Wood Pigeon, doubtless owing to the fact that it is an easy matter to mistake one for the other when flying, a remark which also applies to the Rock Dove.

It is not called Wood Pigeon because of its resorting to woods altogether, although it does frequent them, particularly those of an ancient character, for it is also found breeding in company with the Rock Doves on seaside cliffs, and this the more so on the coast of the broad-acre shire of York.

The name of Stock Dove is derived, so Hudson says, from its breeding in holes in trees and pollard tops, but why this should warrant the name of "Stock" I can hardly translate! This species is also called Blue-backed Dove, Blue Rucker, and Bush Dove. The local names of some birds are decidedly puzzling. For instance, why should this bird be called the Bush Dove? I can find no answer unless it is that in sandy districts its nest is occasionally placed under a furze bush.

The breeding season extends from February to October. The nesting sites I have already mentioned. The nest consists of sticks and twigs, but often no nest at all is found, as for instance in sandy districts the burrow of a rabbit is chosen. Two eggs are laid, and these are white, being 1·45 by 1·15 inches.

The note may best be described as a "crooning" or "grunting" in a continuous murmur.

The diet is made up of seeds and leaves of succulent plants, worms, snails, beech mast, acorns, etc.

Turtle Dove

It is by no means an uncommon bird, but it is not met with so frequently as the Ring Dove, although one or two, or even three of the Dove family are doubtless often confounded, and it may be more plentiful than is generally supposed.

Bluish-grey on head, throat, wings and lower parts; metallic reflections on the bottom portions of neck; wine-red breast; on the last two secondaries and some of the wing-coverts is a spot of black; primaries grey at the base, verging into dusky; grey tail, with black bars near the end, the outer feather having a spot of white on the outer web, near the base; iris, reddish-brown; yellow bill, red at the base; red feet. Length, thirteen and a half inches.

XXXII. -DOVE, TURTLE (*Turtur communis*).

THIS Dove, which is the smallest of the four which breed in our country, is also the only member of the family which is a summer visitor, the remaining three being with us all the year. It is when Nature is clad in her freshest robes of beauty, when the wild flowers garnish the hedge-rows, and the thickets resound with the notes of Warblers, that the voice of the Turtle is heard in our land. Who has not heard the soft, agreeable, and somewhat plaintive crooning? It stands out alone in the orchestra of Nature, and is as welcome as the trilling lay of a Lark or the carol of a Wren. Nature lovers, and others too, regard the Turtle or Wrekin Dove with much felicity, and although the poets have adopted the bird as an emblem of faithfulness in love, I agree in a measure with Blumenbach, who assures us that "as to its highly-prized fidelity and chastity, setting aside idle fables, the Turtle Dove presents nothing superior to other birds which lead the same mode of life."

It arrives late in April from Africa, and commences nesting in May. I have always found a low bush or the pliant branches of some tree which has sprung up in a coppice by the side of its larger relative to be the favourite situation chosen in which to place its frail twig and stick structure, but a large hedge is sometimes selected, as well as high trees. How delicate the two eggs appear when lighted upon suddenly in some thick spinny, dark and almost impenetrable! Notice, too, how

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quietly the Turtle slips off the nest compared with the Ring Dove, which bird often leads to the detection of its nest by fluttering and scampering about in its eagerness to get out of the way, and then flaps off through the tops of the tall firs.

The eggs are creamy-white, about 1·18 by ·90 inches, and often nearly oval in shape. When blown, the pinkish tinge almost disappears.



TURTLE DOVE ($\frac{1}{3}$ Natural Size).

The food is very similar to that of the last bird, consisting of seeds of all kinds, and leaves of plants, insects and snails.

It is only eleven and a half inches in length; has a wine-red tinge on the ash head and nape; black space on sides of neck with tips of white; pale wine-red neck and breast; ash-brown back; dusky primaries; bluish-ash secondaries; wing-coverts and scapulars rust-red, with a centre spot of black; belly and under tail-coverts white;

Eider Duck

dusky tail, with all but the two feathers in the centre tipped with white ; the outside feathers with a white edge externally ; yellowish-red iris ; red feet ; brown bill.

XXXIII.—DUCK, EIDER (*Somateria mollissima*).

EIDER down quilts are better known by the majority of people than the bird now under review, but perhaps not one person in a hundred is aware of the fact that it is from the Eider Duck that this article of commerce is obtained.

This Duck, which is also called the Colk, Dunter Duck, Great Black and White Duck, and St Cuthbert's Duck, is the largest of its family included in these sketches, and is nearly always found in the vicinity of the sea.

The Eider is rarely met with, at any rate during the breeding season, other than in the extreme north of our island. It is a thorough bird of the sea, coming to land only for the purpose of rearing its young. It loves to frequent precipitous rocks, breeding on them and obtaining its food, which consists of shell fish and crustacea, in the surrounding sea. The breeding season is from the middle of May to the beginning of June, the nest being placed in crevices of rocks, or on the ground amongst grass or sea campion.

The nests are large, and consist of dry grass, bits of seaweed, sometimes with heather twigs intermixed, warmly lined with down from the parent's breast, gradually accumulated during the time the eggs are being laid. The usual number is from five to seven, and they are pale olive-green, smooth, and oval in shape. The work of nest building and the process of incubation is left entirely to the female, and, as is usual with the Duck tribe, the more gaudily attired male keeps away from the nest, although in the case of the Eider he joins his mate when she leaves the nest for food, and at such times the pair may be seen swimming round side by side. Before leaving the nest, the eggs are carefully covered up.

The down from the bird's breast, as already stated, forms a valuable article of commerce, each Duck yielding about four ounces, which, when cleaned, is worth about £1 per pound.

This Duck is generally regarded as a silent bird, but, during the breeding season, Charles Dixon states, that

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it possesses a note somewhat after that of the Ring Dove, and besides this, the male utters grunting notes, which can be heard a long way off.

The length of the bird is twenty-five inches ; it has a greenish bill, in the centre, half way to the nostrils, is a wedge of black feathers, similar to those on the crown and forehead ; the crown is bisected by a line of white which goes on to the nape, which is pale green, and divided by a further line of white from a patch of green on either side of neck ; white cheeks, back and wing-coverts ; secondaries, which are sickle-shaped, yellowish-white ; almost black wing-feathers, rump and tail, with a patch of white on each side of the last named ; rosy-buff breast ; black abdomen ; legs and feet dull green. Female—rufous-brown, barred with blackish.

XXXIV.—DUCK, TUFTED (*Fuligula cristata*).

OLD Hardweather, as the male of this species is called in some localities, and the two sexes are also named Black Poker, Tufted Wigeon and Tufted Pochard, is by no means a bird resorting to the same situations as the Duck which last received attention. It is more often found during the winter frequenting the coasts of Britain than at any other season, resorting to inland fresh-water lakes and ponds during the breeding season exclusively. It is found, however, in the last-named situations also throughout the year. It may be called a marine and fresh-water duck.

During the daytime the Tufted Duck does not exert itself to any extent ; it prefers to roam at night after its food, which consists of aquatic herbage, insects and fish. It squats lazily upon the water, basking in the sunlight, or snoozing until shortly before the sun sets, then up and doing.¹

The breeding season is similar to that of the Eider Duck, the nest being placed among grass or rushes, near a pond or lake, or other water. It consists of aquatic herbage, lined with the bird's own down.

Eight to ten eggs are laid, sometimes more, and these

¹ Whilst Mr Hudson states that it "is inactive by day, floating lazily on the water, dozing, or preening its feathers," Sir Herbert Maxwell informs me that "Tufted Duck are perpetually diving for food during all hours of the day."



NEST AND EGGS OF EIDER DUCK.

Wild Duck

are greenish-buff, very like those of the Pochard, and are often very dirty.

The note is best described as a grating cry. Hett gives it thus:—"Call, 'kr-kr-kurra'; alighting, 'currugh, currugh.'"

Black and white are the colours most prominent in the male bird; the former over the whole, with the exception of the speculum, flanks and belly, which are white. On the head and neck there is a purplish gloss; irides brilliant yellow; legs and feet dark blue. The female is dark brown, the under parts being brownish-grey. The male bird changes its colour in May. Length, seventeen inches.

XXXV.—DUCK, WILD (*Anas boscas*).

OF the three birds bearing the name of Duck the one now before us is probably the best known. Although such an extremely common bird there are peculiarities in regard to it which are not found in any other British species. The Mallard (male), Mallart or Stock Duck, is noted for the fact that it is dissimilar to all other British birds, with the exception of others of the Duck tribe, in regard to its moult. The Duck (female) and Drake (male) do not moult at the same season, the latter having recourse to change his plumage as soon as the eggs are being incubated by his mate, and, curious to relate, he then assumes the garb of the female! Most birds moult after the nesting season is over, but in the case of the Wild Duck this rule does not apply, for in the very middle of the breeding season the male bird is obliged to break away from his partner, leaving her to the task of rearing the young, while he himself goes into hiding for the moulting season. In all the phenomena of ornithology this is perhaps the strangest, for up to the time when the Drake has to break the family tie he is most attentive to the nesting duties, and towards his partner, but so soon as the change of dress period arrives, away he goes, leaving the female to get on as best she can. For three or four months after the new garb has been put on the *Drake* becomes a temporary *Duck*, wearing a mottled-brown plumage, then when autumn comes along a further change takes place, the body feathers moulting away, and the Duck (in so far as its

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plumage is concerned) once more assumes its richer dress, and becomes again the Drake. Who has not watched a small company of Wild Duck flying along, high up, with outstretched necks, their forms easily discernible against the sky line? Then round and round, and finally settling themselves down on an island in some secluded lake. It is one of the sights I always look for in my rambles around their accustomed haunts. It is stated that the flight is at the rate of ninety miles an hour, a fact which will be appreciated by those who have watched half a dozen of them until, in an amazing short space of time, they have disappeared some miles away.

It breeds in April and May, but is sometimes earlier and at others later, the nest being placed generally among rushes and sedges near water, but not always. For example, I know of an instance of this bird placing its nest under a blackberry bush in Dorsetshire, in a thatched barn, and under furze bushes two or three miles away from water. And again, a curious incident was recorded in one of the papers as having occurred in the neighbourhood of Jedburgh. While one of the foresters in the employment of the Marquis of Lothian was returning from work he observed a Wild Duck fly from a large larch tree. On a close examination he observed a common Brown Owl looking down from what appeared to be a nest in a cleft of the tree, about thirty feet from the ground, and apparently at the place from which the Duck had just flown. Curiosity prompted him to climb to the place, which he did with some difficulty. The Owl, on his approach, flew off, and to his surprise he found in the nest two eggs—an Owl's and a Wild Duck's. It is not uncommon for both Owls and Wild Duck to build their nests high up on trees, but it is uncommon for one nest to be appropriated by both birds.

The nest is composed of reeds and grass; eleven or twelve eggs are laid, which are pale green.

The food consists of aquatic insects, frogs, fish and their spawn, grain, and so on. The call is a "quack"—also "quork," or "dree-k," "dree-k."

The bill is yellowish; glossy green head and neck, with a ring of white following; deep chestnut on the hind neck and breast; a greenish-purple speculum, bordered above and below with white, is across the

Dunlin

secondaries ; black rump, as well as upper tail-coverts and the curled tail-feathers, which are four in number, the remaining feathers of the tail being grey ; flanks and belly greyish-white ; velvet-black under tail-coverts ; orange-red legs and feet. Length, twenty-four inches. The female is smaller, and has a greenish bill ; dark brown crown ; and the general plumage is mottled-brown and buff ; green speculum.

XXXVI.—DUNLIN (*Tringa alpina*).

THIS member of the Sandpiper family is fairly well distributed in the British Isles as a breeding bird, but it is during the autumn that it is found in very considerable numbers, congregating on the coasts and presenting a very attractive appearance. Our visitors at this season come from the far north, and on reaching our shores they sweep along, performing singular evolutions. Every individual, as if by some signal or command, simultaneously shows now the upper, now the under surface, which glance alternately, producing a most pleasing effect.

During the breeding season this bird of many names, some of which are Bundie, Churr, Sea Snipe, Sea Lark, Plover's Page, Ox Bird, and Purre (young), resorts to fens and moors, those birds found during the summer on the sandbanks and like situations being probably immature or non-breeding birds like the Curlews on the south coast, already mentioned in the sketch of that bird.

Marine insects and small crustacea go to make up the diet, and the voice is hoarse and grating, although the male utters a pleasing love-call of a trilling character during the spring.

The nest is placed in a depression in the ground, usually well hidden by overhanging heather, grass or rushes ; a few bents, bits of roots or dry grass, a small twig or so, sometimes a sprinkling of moss, being used. The four eggs are greenish-white, spotted and blotched with reddish-brown. It breeds in May or June.

The bird has a rufous crown with black streaks ; chestnut mantle with black variegations ; rest of upper parts grey ; throat and upper portion of breast greyish-white and striped ; lower breast black ; white belly. The female is the largest of the sexes, measuring eight

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inches. In winter the plumage is more or less grey above; white underneath, with a band of grey on the lower breast.

XXXVII.—EAGLE, GOLDEN (*Aquila chrysaëtus*).

It seems almost like a fairy tale to write about an Eagle being still found breeding in, or even inhabiting, the British Isles, the war of extermination which has been waged by collectors, pot-shot hunters, game preservers, sheep and cattle owners, and others, having been almost accomplished. It is a fact which should cause bird lovers much satisfaction to know that there are, at any rate, a few breeding stations left of this noble bird, but they are far away in the north of our island. Those in the south are to blame as well as others for the decrease of the Eagle, for its appearance south of the Tweed results in every pot-shot hunter hurrying indoors to get his gun to shoot "the great big bird." If he should be caught in the act shooting any bird which is in the protected list, and duly summoned, he is fined perhaps half a sovereign and sells the specimen to some collector for five times the amount of the fine imposed upon him! By a recent enactment, however, this state of affairs has been remedied, inasmuch as a magistrate is now empowered to order the forfeiture of the specimen.

The sight of an Eagle flying is one never to be forgotten, the flight is so grand, majestic, strong, and well sustained. Or when seen sitting on some craggy precipice close to its eyrie, the Golden Eagle, or Black Eagle as it is called in Scotland, presents a most imposing appearance. This bird is associated in our minds with ideas of courage, strength and ferocity, characteristics which are not displayed even by some of the species of the genus *Falco*, as the Kestrel for an example, still less so by the species of other genera.

The diet is a differential one, carrying away, as the bird has been reported to do, young children, although it has yet to be proved I believe whether or not human flesh is devoured by these noble birds of prey. The food may be said to consist of young and sickly lambs, hares, fawns, rabbits, rats, ducks and grouse. It utters a shriek; call-note "bark" or "yelp," oft repeated.

White-tailed Eagle

This Eagle is an early breeder, March and April being the months in which its nest may usually be looked for, but sometimes later. The nest, which is made up of sticks, twigs, rushes, heath, etc., is generally placed upon the jutting ledge of some inaccessible precipice. In forests the nest is placed near the summit of a lofty tree.

Usually two eggs are laid, but sometimes three, and these are dirty white, blotched, spotted, and clouded more or less with varying shades of red or reddish-brown. Several days elapse between the laying of each egg.

The length of the male is three feet; head, back of neck and legs reddish-brown and lustrous; remaining portions of body dark brown; nearly black primaries; brownish-black secondaries; dark grey tail, ink bars and tips of brownish-black; the strong beak is bluish at the base and black at the tip; brown iris; cere and feet yellow; the powerful talons are bluish-black.

Doubtless few people are aware of what the construction of one single bird's feather is. An authority on such matters has stated that a Golden Eagle's feather consists of one shaft, two thousand barbs, five millions and a half of barbules, and fifty-four millions of cilia and hooklets.

XXXVIII.—EAGLE, WHITE-TAILED (*Haliaeetus albicilla*).

THIS, the second and only remaining Eagle in Britain, is known by various names. Perhaps the commonest of all is the Sea Eagle, but others which may be mentioned are Common Gannet, Erne, Fen Eagle, Rough-footed Eagle, Cinereous Eagle, and Ring-tailed Eagle.

As with the last mentioned, this Eagle breeds in the far north and Ireland, resorting to large pieces of water, or along the sea-coast girted with high and precipitous rocks. Specimens are often recorded as having been obtained by the pot-shot hunter down south, but there can be no doubt that this bird is often wrongly described, and it is really the Golden Eagle which has fallen a prey to these detestable gunners.

This Eagle eats carrion, but it is also very fond of fish, small mammals, and aquatic birds. It watches from a great height the Osprey fishing, and when it sees that the

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Osprey has caught a fish the Eagle goes in pursuit, forcing the other to drop the fish, and then catches it before it reaches the water. The Sea Eagle will watch a fish rise to the surface, then swoop down and bury its talons in it, and try to steer it to land, using its spread wings as a sail. But sometimes the wary fish is cute enough to dive, and the Eagle, not being able to free his talons, perishes. In a Sea Eagle's nest a salmon weighing ten pounds has been found, thus showing great powers of lifting and carrying.

These birds often have combats of a very ferocious nature between each other, and so engaged have they been at times that one or the other has allowed itself to be captured ere it became conscious of the danger at hand. They fight to the death, but, strange to say, large animals, such as foxes and dogs, they avoid—otherwise they are very bold and courageous birds.

The vocal powers are by no means great, though Montagu humorously relates receiving two birds which were sent to him from Ireland, and which were detained on their arrival at Bristol by an officer of excise upon a plea that there was a duty on all "Singing birds." One always admires the vigilance of these officers of the law! The voice can best be described as a yelping cry, somewhat shriller than that of the Golden species.

This Eagle chooses the most precipitous rocks as a nesting site and builds in almost inaccessible places. The eggs are two in number, white in colour, rounded in shape, and rough in texture.

The plumage is brown above; head and neck lighter than the rest; chocolate-brown underneath; white tail; yellowish-white bill, cere and feet; black claws. The tail of the young Eagle is brown. The male measures two feet four inches, while his mate is six inches longer.

XXXIX.—FALCON, HOBBY (*Falco subbuteo*).

THIS Hawk is one of the most beautiful we have, and it is pleasing to state that the species is now once more becoming familiar in several parts of the country.

It is also called the Hobby and Hobby Hawk. It is the only member of this interesting family which is a

Hobby Falcon

summer visitor to our shores, although specimens have been obtained, at the Isle of Wight amongst other places, during the winter. It reaches us about April, breeding in May and June, and departs some time in September or October for Africa and India, where it spends the winter.

Though small in point of size as compared with other members of its family, this bird is of a very courageous character, and secures a full-grown Partridge with ease. It appears, however, to have a partiality for Larks, and these and other small birds it delights in chasing until its



HOBBY FALCON ($\frac{1}{5}$ Natural Size).

powers of endurance give out, and the fatal moment arrives for it to strike. Besides the birds mentioned, it also feeds on Fieldfares, beetles, dragon flies, etc., and pilfers amongst young Ducks and Pheasants.

No member of this family possesses vocal powers of any beauty; indeed, if my memory serves me, the Chanting Hawk is the only minstrel of its race, and that of the Hobby is likened to "pree, pree," or a shrill "chatter."

High trees are resorted to for a nesting site, and frequently the nest of a Crow or Magpie is taken possession of. Similar materials to those utilised by the last-

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named birds are used, and three or four eggs are laid, the lesser number generally. They are a nearly uniform pale dull red in ground colour, thickly spotted and mottled with shades of deeper red.

The plumage is bluish-black above ; reddish-yellow, with longitudinal brown streaks, underneath ; moustaches black and broad in character ; lower tail-coverts and legs reddish ; bluish beak, dark at the tip ; cere greenish-yellow ; iris dark brown ; yellow feet ; black claws. In the female the colours are duller, and broader streaks below. Length, twelve to fourteen inches.

XL.—FALCON, PEREGRINE (*Falco peregrinus*).

THIS beautiful Falcon is protected on many estates in our country, and thanks to this it still exists in spite of persecution. It is a noble bird, and may well be termed the bull dog of the rapacious birds. It is both plucky and daring. Respecting my opening remarks as to the protection meted out to the Blue-backed Falcon, Duck Hawk, Lamer, Red Falcon, and the Tassel—some provincial names given to this Falcon—it is interesting to note that it means instant dismissal to anyone employed on the estate of Lord Falmouth in Cornwall if one of these birds is killed. We fervently wish that other landowners would emulate Lord Falmouth's example, not only with regard to the Peregrine but also to other birds which the gamekeepers ruthlessly destroy. The genuine keeper and sportsman are two of the birds' best friends. The ordinary keeper has fostered certain gross superstitions in his excessive zeal to preserve game, and all Hawks and Owls are shot without hesitation as culprits of the deepest dye. After all, the work of reformation which needs to be done is to promote sound knowledge of the ways of birds.

Falconry was a sport of what is generally called the Middle Ages, but we are given to understand that a revival is taking place amongst many people of wealth and distinction in this country. It is, however, a very costly hobby, even the most ordinary Hawks used for falconry costing as much as £100 apiece. They require most careful attention, and it is difficult to get men qualified to

Peregrine Falcon

take charge of them under a salary of, say, £200 a year. It is one of the most scientific and difficult of all sports, and differs from most others in that it can be followed in one form or another all the year round.

Hawks of various species are used by the modern falconer, the principal being the Peregrine. Both in this country and in the East—the home and cradle of falconry—this noblest of Falcons is the falconer's "stand-by." When taken from the nest it is generally trained to fly at game, such as Grouse, Partridge, Pheasant and Wild Duck. The "Passage Hawk," or mature wild-caught bird, taken when migrating in the autumn, is generally used for flight at the Heron, Rook, Gull and the like; and when it has been in training for some time, and has become thoroughly reclaimed, it is used like the nestling or eyas for game of all kinds.

It is on high precipitous rocks bordering the sea-coast that the nest is placed. I have known of a pair breeding for many years off Beachy Head. Each year a crazy fool goes over the Head and robs the young, and, sadder still, finds ready customers for the clutch of four fledglings year after year. To the credit of the Sussex County authorities, be it said, they are making creditable endeavours to protect this and the rarer of our British birds. In 1899 four men were fined thirty shillings each at Lewes for illegally capturing two young Peregrine Falcons on the Newhaven Cliffs. A good dose of the cat, or imprisonment without the option of a fine, would probably have had a better effect than a fine of a few shillings. These particular birds were sent to Sir Gerard Lascelles, Chief Administrator of the New Forest, he being interested in falconry, but sportsman that he is, he promptly returned the birds. If there were no market for these things the supply would undoubtedly stop to a great extent, and many might emulate Sir Gerard's example. It also nests in trees and generally chooses the deserted nest of a Crow or some similar structure. The nest is composed of bents, rabbit flick, straws and sticks, and the breeding season is April, May, and beginning of June.

Four eggs are laid, and these are of a reddish-brown colour, with darker blotches and variegations.

The flight is very rapid, and the powers of endurance are nothing short of marvellous. No more graceful creature

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wings the air or is more majestic to watch, and rare is it indeed that any of its prey escapes. This latter consists of various sea and land birds, such as Snipe, Ducks, Partridges, and, Hudson says, it has been known to kill Kestrels, Jays and Magpies.

The note is sharp and uttered two or three times in rapid succession, not unlike that of the Sparrow Hawk, and somewhat resembling the words "hek, kek, kek."

The plumage is dark bluish-grey above, with bands of a darker hue; bluish-black head and moustaches, which descend from the gape; white underneath; transverse bars of brown on breast; blue beak, growing darker towards the tip; cere yellow; dark brown iris; yellow feet; black claws. The plumage above, of the female, is tinged with brown, and underneath with reddish-yellow. The male is fifteen inches in length, and his mate two inches longer.

XLI.—FLYCATCHER, PIED (*Muscicapa atricapilla*).

Of the two Flycatchers which visit us during the summer, the one under notice is by far the least met with. A great many bird lovers have never seen the Epicurean Warbler, or Goldfinch, two of the bird's local names, other than in the skin, and never in all the beauty of the countryside. It appears that the Pied Flycatcher is found in a few districts in the north of England and south of Scotland, North Wales, and in the counties bordering the latter.

The usual situation chosen for a nesting site is in the holes of decayed trees, and the nest consists of leaves, bark and hay, lined with hair and feathers. The pale greenish-blue eggs are somewhat pointed in shape, and although some writers assert that as many as eight eggs are laid, the usual number is five. It breeds in May and June.

In its general habits this Flycatcher closely resembles the better known Spotted species which will next receive attention, but it should be noted in passing that the present bird arrives in our country somewhat earlier. It may be confidently looked for very early in May, whereas the remaining British species makes its appearance from the 7th to the 20th of that month. The food consists of

Spotted Flycatcher

insects of various kinds, and although the Spotted Flycatcher may take a few soft fruits, the Pied species is said never to touch fruit of any kind. When it is borne in mind, therefore, that the bird has been known to feed its young more than a score of times every hour from sunrise to sunset, and the number of insects the parent birds also destroy, it is obvious that the good done is inestimable. Macgillivray gives an instance of Flycatchers feeding their young 537 times in the course of a day, and the Rev. F. O. Morris relates that he observed them continue to feed their fledglings until after nine o'clock at night, about which time, even on the longest days, it becomes too dark for them to continue their flycatching any longer.

The alarm-note is not very unlike the word "chuck," which is commonly repeated two or three times when the bird is approached, and which leads to detection. A short, little varied, though far from unpleasant warble, is also uttered, every now and then interrupted by the pursuit and capture of some passing denizen of the air.

Both of the British Flycatchers winter in Africa.

A double moult takes place, occurring in autumn, and again in the spring. Above the colour is black, including the tail; the same on wings, with white on central coverts; white edging on scapulars; white underneath. The female is greyish-brown in lieu of the black; the white parts are not of so pure a character, and the three lateral feathers of the tail have white edges. The length is five inches.

XLII.—FLYCATCHER, SPOTTED (*Muscicapa grisola*).

As I write, it is the middle of August. The sun is scorching hot, and we have had no rain for weeks past, in spite of which many species of wild flowers flourish by the wayside, and everything looks green and beautiful. Down one of the glorious old green lanes, known to us since childhood, we find a comfortable resting-place, commanding a fine view of the surrounding country. What exquisite surroundings are these! Above us, clusters of nuts quickly ripening in the August sunshine; Robin Redbreast nimbly hopping almost within arm's reach; the laugh of a Green Woodpecker; the frolics of some rabbits on the green

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sward ; the alarm notes of a Blackbird and a startled Jay ; the cooing of distant Ring Doves ; the flight of Rooks, and a pair of Spotted Flycatchers on yonder railings catching insects as if their very lives depended on making a record before the sun sets ! What more could one wish for ? How interesting to watch these latter birds as they dexterously fly, dive, and at times hang as if suspended by a thread, after the winged creatures which in August are probably more abundant than at any other season of the year.

Such unceasing work does not ever seem to tire the birds, as time after time they dart and pursue, then back again to the watch tower on the railings or the old post or gate by the woodland. We are not far from an old farm garden, and here probably in the secluded niche of a wall, in the grape vine climbing the old homestead, or between some posts or the branches of a trained fruit tree, or upon the beams of some outhouse, the nest has been placed and the young safely reared.

Spotted Flycatchers love to frequent gardens and orchards, and for this reason suffer persecution somewhat, but right-minded persons regard them with pleasure and encourage them to return again to take up the good work of a past summer. True, this bird has been named the Cherry Sucker, Cherry Snipe and Figeater, but Spotted Flycatcher, Bee Bird, and other such localisations may well be placed against such evident defamations of character. Sawflies are a favourite food of this bird, and it is to the gardeners' advantage to encourage it wherever gooseberry bushes are located, for these have no worse pest than the voracious larvæ of the sawfly. The very fact of the bird having a partiality for gardens and orchards results in the owners thereof condemning it without taking the trouble to inquire into its true character. How I should like to have had a crowd of such persecutors with me on that August morn, watching a pair of these birds at their useful work. Many times I noticed them alight on the ground, and with the aid of my glasses and a subsequent inspection of the ground where the exploitations were made, I strongly suspect that the birds were catching grasshoppers.

I have stated where the nest is placed, and this during May, June and July. It consists of fine grasses, a few hairs and moss, and the eggs number four or five. They are greyish-white, blotched or freckled with orange-brown.

Gadwall

A very curious nest of this bird is placed on record, consisting as it did to a great extent of wax vestas, and this will be more readily acceptable when it is stated that it was found in Hyde Park, London. This particular nest also contained the paper of two cigarette ends and some long threads of coloured silk.

The note consists of a weak chirp, quite distinct, so far as I am aware, from the utterance of any other Britisher, and this is seldom heard after the production of the young.

This bird is one of our latest summer visitors, being in this respect similar to the Swift and Nightjar, departing about the third week in September, and spending the winter in Africa.

Ash-brown above; a central dark line on the head feathers; white underneath, the sides being marked with brown streaks of a longitudinal nature; red-tinged flanks. Length, five and a half inches.

XLIII.—GADWALL (*Chaulelasmus streperus*).

THIS bird, also called the Gadwell, Gray, or Grey Duck, and Common Gadwall, is not at all well known excepting in those districts which it frequents. Why it should be called the Common Gadwall I do not know, for although an influx of visitors takes place in the winter, during the summer it is a very rare bird. Nevertheless, in Norfolk the bird is protected and I believe breeds in large numbers.

It is not unlike the far better known Wild Duck, but it is not so large, neither is its plumage of so rich a character. It is a fresh-water Duck, and so far as Britain is concerned, is the rarest of them all. In many respects it resembles the Mallard; its voice is simply a "quack, quack," repeated a few times in succession; it feeds mostly after sunset when many of its relatives are preparing for rest, being rarely seen in the daytime.

The food consists of aquatic insects, spawn and fry of fish, also seeds and plants.

It possesses a very rapid flight, and is an expert diver.

It breeds in May and June, the nest being placed among rushes and reeds, and is built of rushes, dry grass and leaves, with a lining of down.

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Five to seven eggs are laid, but the clutch is often larger. These are creamy-white or pale buff.

The Gadwall is twenty-one inches long; has a lead-coloured beak; light brown head and upper neck, mottled with darker shades; light grey on a dark ground is present on the back; median wing-coverts chestnut; greater coverts blackish; brown on primaries; black and brown secondaries, a white speculum being formed in the outer webs; bluish-black rump and upper tail-coverts; dark brown tail-feathers, edged with paler tints; lower neck dark grey, each feather with a pale grey margin; white breast and belly; grey flanks and vent; under tail-coverts bluish-black; orange legs and feet. The female has a light brown head and upper neck, mottled with darker shades; lower hind neck and upper parts brown; white on speculum and underneath.

XLIV.—GANNET (*Sula bassana*).

THIS bird is far better known as the Solan Goose, whilst three other names given to it are Channel Goose, Gan and Gant. Sea-bird life would lose much of its charm without this bird, for the graceful actions of the diving Gannet fascinates and interests the bird lover for many an hour. Bent on some fishing expedition, a pair of these beautiful birds soar upwards through the air. At a considerable altitude, the eyes, with that curious focussing power which belongs to bird life, can penetrate the sea water below to such a depth that the evolutions of the fish are clearly visible. Suddenly the birds swoop down with a superb headlong dive into the ocean. For two minutes or more nothing can be seen; but all at once a Gannet reappears with a fish crossways in its mandibles. After many ineffectual efforts to adjust so dainty a morsel to the capacities of its gullet, the bird, with manifest signs of anger, tosses the unfortunate fish high in the air, catches it lengthways in the fall, and lo! the deed is accomplished. The two birds probably work in concert beneath the water in order to frighten the more unwary fish to sudden destruction.

Writing to the *Times* newspaper Mr T. Digby Piggot has given a very interesting and able account of many sea

Gannet

birds found inhabiting two small islands which lie some ten or twelve miles to the west of the coast of Kerry, Ireland. These two islands are called the rock of St Michael of the Great Skellig, and the smaller one I believe is named the Little Skellig. After writing of the first named Mr Piggot proceeds:—

“But of even greater interest than the Great Skelligs, if this is possible, for all but the Church antiquarian pure and simple, is the smaller sister island, a triangular slaty rock of some fourteen acres, which rises, with a tilt to the northwards, four hundred and forty feet from the sea, a mile nearer the mainland.

“It is one of the most southerly, and perhaps the largest breeding stations of the Gannet in the British Isles, and must in old days have been a very important adjunct to the monastery, supplying fresh eggs and poultry in the summer, and, for winter consumption, smoked Goose and ‘poffin’ in unlimited quantities.

“It is at the south-west end that the Gannets are massed, crowding together to nest in numbers inconceivable. Two or three solid acres were, at a low estimate, at the time of our visit in May, as white with living birds as if covered with snow, though scarcely an egg had been then hatched, and outlying parties of twenties and hundreds were quartered on every available flat space around. The breeze which blew to the boat from the tops was heavy with the smell of musty oil, and, when a shot was fired, the sky was clouded with black-tipped white wings carrying, nearly amidship, skiff-shaped bodies pointed fore and aft, without any perceptible lessening of the numbers of the sitting birds.”

Why this bird should be so often termed the Solan Goose I am at a loss to understand, for it is not at all Goose-like in character, being in fact the connecting link between the Cormorants and the Pelicans.

The Latin name *Bassana* originated from the belief that the bird's only breeding place was on the far-famed Bass Rock, where, by the way, ten thousand couples are said to congregate each year to breed. There are several other places, however, where the bird is found in very large numbers, and amongst these may be mentioned Lundy Island; on the West Scottish Coast; on the Pembroke-shire Coast, and Mr Piggot in his remarks covers Ireland.

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It breeds in May and June, great numbers usually breeding together on the ledges of some precipitous rocks. The nest is often hardly distinguishable as such, the seaweed, grass, straw, and various other paraphernalia picked up at sea, being trodden on and emaciated by the bird. One egg only is laid, and this is exactly similar in colouring, and subject to the same peculiarities, as those of the Cormorant and Shag.

The food consists of fish, such as herrings, pilchards, sprats and mackerel.

The note is in the nature of a harsh cry, which has been compared to the words "Carra-carra-carra."

The mature bird has a buff-coloured head and neck, and the remainder of the plumage white, with the exception of the primaries, which are black. In the young the first year's dress consists of blackish-brown upper parts flecked with white; dusky ash and buff underneath. With the sixth year the dark markings disappear, and the dress of the adult bird is assumed. The length of the bird is thirty-four inches.

XLV.—GARGANEY (*Querquedula circia*).

THIS bird, a very near relative of the Teal, has a variety of names, and amongst them are those of Crick, Cricket Teal, Gargle Teal, Pied Wigeon, and Summer Teal. I take it that it is called Summer Teal because it is a spring migrant, remaining only during the summer to breed, whilst the localisation—Cricket Teal—being translated, means that the low, jarring note of the male bird during the pairing season resembles that of a cricket. This bird is an extremely rapid flier, and to see it with outstretched neck and hanging legs, uttering the while a sharp quacking cry, which is twice repeated, affords the naturalist ample variation from the sights and sounds in which he so dearly loves to participate.

In many of its habits it resembles the Common Teal, but as a table delicacy it is not nearly so much esteemed.

The nest, which is built in April or May, is placed in the beds of reeds, and it is said to have been found in fields of standing corn. It is usually concealed by a tuft of grass, rushes, and similar herbage. It is composed of

Goldfinch

aquatic and other herbage, well lined with down from the bird's own body.

The ten to twelve eggs are buff or creamy-white, very similar to those of the Teal.

Fish and their spawn, grain, aquatic insects and frogs constitute the food.

The Garganey has a black bill, and is dark brown on the head, crown, nape and back; a strip of white extends from the eye to back of the neck; cheeks and neck light brown with short hair-like lines of white; black scapulars, with white stripe in centre; bluish-grey on wing-coverts; green speculum, bordered on either side with two white bars; dull brown primaries and tail; black chin; pale brown breast, with darker bands of a crescent order; white belly; flanks with transverse lines of black; tail-coverts underneath, black and white; greyish-brown legs and feet. Sixteen inches in length. The female is of a mottled-brown plumage, with the eye stripe yellowish-white, and the speculum a dull metallic green, barred on either side with white.

XLVI.—GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis elegans*).

WHATEVER may be said to the contrary there is not much doubt that this beautiful and beneficial member of the Finch tribe is in some localities decreasing in the British Isles, and Hudson observes it has been so decreasing for the last fifty years. There are districts, however, where it is increasing, but against these must be placed those neighbourhoods where it has entirely disappeared, and others where it is as much as it can do to hold its own against the bird-catchers.

It seems absolutely hopeless to attempt to blot out bird-catching, and more especially the catching of Goldfinches. Not only is this bird in particular sought after because of its attractive appearance—vying in its bright colouring with some of the brilliant species of tropical climes—and because of its song, but also for the readiness with which it pairs with a Canary and produces a valuable progeny known as “Mules.”

There is no doubt in my mind that we shall in the future feel the loss of the country's wild birds in a greater

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degree than we do at the present time. I may be accused of sentimentalism, but British birds, like British men and women, were meant to be free, and this from a practical, as well as from a humanitarian point of view.

The usefulness of the bird is more particularly to be noted in orchards, gardens and fruit plantations. It clears off, as food for its young, quantities of the apple aphids and of the apple sucker, as well as of the destructive caterpillars of the winter moth. After nesting, the Goldfinch feeds upon weeds, weed seeds, and grain. Before the weed seeds are ripe it eats the flower heads of chickweed, groundsel and other soft weeds. Afterwards it takes the seeds of thistles of several species, and of other plants which have winged seeds, docks, plantains, burdock, dandelions, groundsel, sorrel, chickweed, and of various cruciferous plants, such as charlock, wild mustard, and other objectionable weeds. This is no mere haphazard list, but one published by the Board of Agriculture.

It possesses a variety of names, and not inaptly too, many of them, such as Thistle Finch, Draw-water, Goldspink, King Harry, Proud Tailor, Seven-coloured Linnet, Red-fronted Thistle Finch, etc.

I hardly know of a more pleasing song than that uttered by this Finch; in Nature's orchestra it sounds as a solo, accompanied all round by the warblings and screams of its fellows. With its lively "I like you very much," the last two notes uttered rather more quickly than the former three, and the rest of its delicate, harmonious song, then a few notes which fall rather flat, and then bursting out into liveliness again, it is one which cannot fail to captivate the most indifferent listener.

The nest is not usually built before May, and I have found it to have a partiality for fir trees, but it also builds in gardens, orchards, evergreens and bushes. It often chooses the fork of an old apple tree. It is a pretty structure, after the style of the Chaffinch's, but smaller. The materials used are similar to those of the latter bird, with the addition of perhaps the seed-down of willow. Four or five eggs are laid, and these are bluish-white, or pale grey, spotted with greyish-purple and red-brown, at times sparingly streaked with the same.

In its actions the Goldfinch is of a very sprightly character, and no more entertaining sight could be wished

Goosander

for than that of a dozen or more of these birds on the tops of thistles extracting seeds therefrom.

The length of the bird is five inches ; has a black head at the back, nape and feathers round the base of the bill ; front of the head and throat blood-red ; white cheeks, fore neck and under parts ; dark brown back and scapulars ; the wings are beautifully variegated with white, black and yellow ; black tail, tipped with white.

XLVII.—GOOSANDER (*Mergus merganser*).

It is difficult to write a glowing life history of many of our British breeding birds, such a number of them resembling one another in their habits, and then again many are almost sure to be far better known to us than those which we have been less fortunate in observing. The bird now receiving attention comes under the last-named category.

With regard to this bird, called also the Dun Diver, Harle Duck (female or young male), Jack Saw, Sawbill, and Sparkling Fowl, it is chiefly a winter visitor, but in the north of Scotland it breeds in fairly good numbers.

As its scientific name denotes, it is a *Merganser*, and is the largest of the three which may be correctly called British. On land, as is the case with other birds of this character, the Goosander presents a very awkward appearance, a fact to be attributed to the placing so far back of its legs. When on or underneath the water, however, no bird is more alert and swift in its fishing exploits, it dives with great celerity, and its toothed bill serves to perfection the purpose of holding its prey securely.

It resorts to inland waters as well as the sea, and a very extraordinary fact in connection with it is that it often places its eggs in the stump or trunk of a hollow tree, a very uncommon nesting site for a water bird to choose.

Besides the situation mentioned, the nest, which is built in April and May, is placed in the banks of fresh-water lochs, among low grass, and holes under rocks. Roots, dry grass, moss, etc., with a down lining, go to make up the structure, and the seven or eight eggs are buff or creamy-yellow, and oval in shape.

The food, as has been noted in passing, consists of fish.

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It utters a low whistling cry.

The bird has a blood-red bill and irides; glossy dark green on head and upper neck; neck underneath and under parts white, with a salmon-pink tinge; black scapulars and upper back; white on wing-coverts; primaries and some of the secondaries ash-brown; ash-grey on lower back and tail; orange-red legs and feet. Twenty-six inches in length. The female is not so richly dressed as her mate, and is reddish-brown on head and neck.

XLVIII.—GOOSE, GREY LAG (*Anser cinereus*).

THIS bird is far better known as the Wild Goose, and it is worth noticing that it is the only Goose now breeding amongst us. I may be criticised for not including in my list the beautiful Canada Goose—I am well aware of the fact that this latter species breeds in a semi-domestic state in our country, and it is stated “in a perfectly wild condition” on the Holkham Marshes in Norfolk—but those ornithologists who are in a position to judge deleted it in the list I submitted to them, and hence the Grey Lag Goose is the sole representative of this family in these sketches.

This bird is the origin from which the domestic Goose of the farmyard has sprung. At one time it was well distributed over our island as a breeder, but the districts in which it is now found are restricted to Scotland and the Hebrides.

Two other names by which this bird is called are Fen Goose and Quinck, the former being given to it because of its resorting to some uninhabited moor, swamp or morass.

It breeds in March, April and May, the nest being placed in some such situation as last mentioned, and consists of sticks, on which is placed sedge, grass and dead leaves, lined with down. It often assumes large dimensions, and the same homestead is resorted to yearly, which doubtless accounts for the proportions referred to.

This Goose is gregarious, and pairs for life. Six to eight eggs are laid, but as many as a dozen have been recorded, and these are dull creamy-white.

The male bird, properly called the Gander, moults earlier than the female, and, in a similar manner to the Wild

Great Crested Grebe

Duck, after a time leaves his mate in sole charge of the young, concealing himself in the rushes or other hiding places until the moult is safely over. When the young are able to attend to their own wants, the Goose commences her moult.

The food consists of grass, grain and young shoots, and Montagu states that it has been shot on the South Downs of England where it has been found feeding on green wheat.

The call resembles "kak-kak," "gag-gag," or a loud "gaggle."

The length of the bird is thirty-five inches; it has a greyish-brown head, neck and upper parts; dull-white lower breast, and abdomen, spotted sparingly with black; rump and wing-coverts, bluish-grey; flesh-coloured bill, with a white nail at the tip; legs and feet same colour as bill. In regard to the colour of the bill of this Goose there seems to be a diversity of opinion, for Macgillivray describes it as "yellowish-orange, with the ungues white or bluish-grey," and in the *Zoologist*, Mr H. Leyborne Popham records the fact that during March 1899 he obtained twenty freshly killed birds, and in no single instance was the bill flesh-colour, but "each bird had a lemon-coloured bill, almost pale orange, with a narrow flesh-coloured line down the centre, and a white nail. Can the explanation be that this is the colour only at this time of year, or that all these authors have taken the colour from the skins? for after the Geese had been dead some days the colour became more as they state. The weight of the birds killed varied between $6\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. and $9\frac{3}{4}$ lbs., so that it is probable that I examined both old and young birds."

Most writers give the bill as "flesh-coloured," with the exceptions, so far as I can ascertain, of Macgillivray and the Rev. F. O. Morris.

XLIX.—GREBE, GREAT CRESTED (*Podiceps cristatus*).

HOURS may be spent watching these birds in their curious exploits, and the observer never seems to tire, some new and previously unobserved characteristic cropping up which interests and amuses him. Often when angling in some fresh-water lake or reservoir I have laid down my rod and

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watched the antics of either the Great Crested or Little Grebes. At one moment a dozen or so appear on my right about fifty yards or more up the water; I make tracks to get a better view of them as I have not got my field-glasses with me so must observe them with the naked eye. I almost get within a half-dozen yards of the little company, when at a given signal they disappear underneath. I watch for them to come up again about the same spot, keeping quite quiet, but they have been hurrying along under the water, and make their appearance fifty yards or so away on my left, from the very spot I first started. This game of hide-and-seek they play with me several times, and evidently delight in baffling observation. At last some of the busy little throng seem to tire and I am able to see them at a much closer range. One or two of the more courageous pop their heads just above water and take in the situation at a glance. Seeing me, down they go again, up again in less time than it takes to write these lines, and so it goes on. It is as interesting as it is amusing, and adds greatly to my day's enjoyment. How curious the Crested Grebe looks whilst participating in the strange antics I have very briefly described, is best left to the imagination of the reader. With its chestnut frill and greenish-brown crest, crown and forehead just discernible above the water's surface, one might almost mistake the bird for some huge pike basking in the sunlight, then making one of its famous sudden darts after a shoal of young dace or minnows.

The Great Crested Grebe has a whole string of local and provincial names, among the more prominent being Ash-coloured Loon, Greater Dabchick, Horned Douker, Horned Dabchick, Tippet Grebe, Diver, and Cargoose.

One of the local names—Tippet Grebe—is understood to mean that the plumage of this bird is made up into tippets, Grebe necklets and other wearing apparel; the destruction of the bird for the purposes named is much to be regretted.

This species is not nearly so plentiful in our country as the bird which next claims our attention, and Mr Aplin mentions the following places as its existing breeding haunts. The Broad's of East Anglia, meres and lakes of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, Rutland, Notts, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Brecon, many parts of Ireland, and "in Scotland it has been recorded as breeding in the

Great Crested Grebe

south." As a matter of fact Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart., M.P., "obtained" a brood for the "White Loch" of Myrtoun, on his Wigtownshire estate, under very extraordinary circumstances. In 1894, when on a visit to Lord Dartmouth, at Patshull, in Staffordshire, he greatly admired the Grebes on the large park mere, and was anxious to obtain some eggs, which, he thought, might possibly be hatched, and the young naturalised on the sanctuary of the White Loch. Owing, however, to the peculiar nature of the incubation of the species, which, like all Grebes, lays its eggs awash, and keeps them constantly wet till they are hatched, Sir Herbert had to abandon the idea. Strange to say, in the November of the same year, a solitary bird (whether male or female it was impossible to say, as it is not easy at a distance to distinguish the sexes) appeared, and remained for two months and disappeared, the lake having become frozen over (notwithstanding the statement in Camden's *Britannia*, that the "White Lake of Myrton never freezes—no not in the hardest winter"). In the following spring the same bird returned, this time with a mate, and in due time they nested, and brought out three young, so that (according to latest accounts) the breed is now firmly established in Sir Herbert's loch sanctuary.

Mr Aplin, in his all-comprehensive survey of the habits of this species, takes note of the homœopathic system of incubation. The nest, he writes, "is but little raised above the surface of the water, and is usually quite wet. So far from being cold, it has been proved that the nests are to some extent hot beds."

This bird breeds in April, May and June, and the nest is easily found, being generally placed by the sides or edges of large fresh-water lakes or reservoirs, in a very conspicuous position. The structure consists of dead or decaying reed and flag stems, and similar aquatic herbage. Three or four eggs are laid, and, like the eggs of many birds of this kind, they are white at first, but soon become dirty, though a tinge of green may nearly always be seen. When the complete clutch is laid, and sometimes before, the eggs are covered up by reeds when the parents leave the nest. The eggs measure 2·2 by 1·45 inches.

It is generally a silent bird, but during the breeding season utters a harsh, grating cry.

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The food is made up of tadpoles, frogs, fish and various aquatic insects.

The bird is twenty-two inches long; has a dark brown and chestnut crown, crest and ruff; white cheeks; dark brown upper parts; white secondaries; silky-white underneath.

L.—GREBE, LITTLE (*Tachybaptus fluvialis*).

WHAT I have written as to the life and habits of the Great Crested Grebe applies almost in every particular to the Little Grebe. It is a dapper little bird, being only nine inches and a half in length, and is known as the Dab-chick, Dobchick, Tom Pudding, Black-chinned Grebe, Dob Chicken, Small Doucker, and so on.

This species is not only found inhabiting large sheets of water, but small pools, rivers, ponds and the like, whilst in severe weather it resorts to the sea coast. It is even more interesting, I think, to observe the operations of these birds than those of the greater species, but it takes a keen and experienced eye to watch them, and it needs an excellent shot to do any harm to them.

One of the most interesting bird studies is to watch the Little Grebe holding the "little Little Grebes" under its wings and diving from the nest when any danger is at hand. It is one of the most striking examples of parental affection in the bird world that I know of.

The breeding season extends from March to July or August, and the nest is placed near water, among herbage and vegetation there found. I have also observed it at the foot of an osier, and often a mere floating houseboat so to speak. It consists of grasses and aquatic reeds. Four to six eggs are laid, which are in the first instance white, but the same remarks apply as to the Great Crested species. They measure 1.45 by 1.0, and are uniform in size at either end, raised in the centre. The eggs are sometimes covered up when the nest is left, but not always. This has given rise to much controversy, and the opinion seems to be that it is done to hide the eggs rather than to keep them warm as Seebohm has noted.

The food is the same as that of the bird last dealt with and the call-note is similar to a stick drawn across a rail; its song, if such it can be called, is likened to the creaking of a rusty hinge on a gate.

Greenfinch

Dark brown head, neck and upper parts ; a sprinkling of white on the secondaries ; black chin ; reddish-chestnut cheeks, throat and sides of neck ; greyish-white underneath ; dusky-brown flanks ; horn-coloured bill ; dull green legs and feet.

Just as this volume goes to press I learn that a new species of Grebe has been found nesting in this country. This is the Black-necked or Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigro-collis*). Several pairs of this bird reared their young in Britain during the summer of 1904, as recorded by Mr O. V. Aplin in the *Zoologist*, No. 95, November 1904, but at present the mention of this important discovery must suffice, as this new species has yet to be recorded as a regular British breeding bird.

LI.—GREENFINCH (*Ligurinus chloris*).

THIS bird is the "Greenfinch" of the ornithologist, and the "Green Linnet" of the country wag and others, and it is also called the Greenulf, Green Grosbeak, Green Chub, Green Bird, and last, but not least, Joey. When in the best of plumage it is a beautiful bird, and exists in good numbers in spite of persecution, the latter not altogether without reason.

The Greenfinch always strikes me as being a particularly wary, nervous and clumsy bird, if I may be so understood. I am never able to get close up to him, not so close for instance as to the sprightly Chaffinch, and as soon as he catches sight of me he flops off his perch, rather than flies, and tumbles along until apparently safe from danger.

I do not wonder at the bird being called in some localities the Green Grosbeak, for it certainly does very much resemble the Grosbeaks in its powerful beak, which it often uses to much purpose. When singing, this somewhat ugly beak does not add to the bird's appearance ; it is not nearly so pleasing as the somewhat sharp beak of the Goldfinch, a near relative, when that beautiful Finch is exercising its vocal powers. Besides the peculiarities named, the Finch now under review seems to me to be a somewhat eccentric bird, and as I have watched it for hours together, a great many of its performances have left an impression upon my mind that the bird at times is hardly accountable for its actions.

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With regard to the food, it eats insects as well as the seeds of obnoxious weeds, the former consisting of such varieties as flies, cockchafers, caterpillars, leaf-rollers, blight, chrysalides, crane flies, wood-boring beetles, etc., and the seeds eaten are, among others, those of the colts-foot, wild mustard, charlock, knot-grass, thistle, and so on. Wild berries are also partaken of, waste corn, buds of trees, and such like. There is no shirking the fact that much damage is done in gardens by this Finch, but when the formidable list of insects, injurious weed seeds, etc., set out above is taken into consideration, there can be little doubt but that the bird does more good than harm. It is only fair to say on behalf of the House Sparrow that a good deal of the harm done in gardens by the Greenfinch is attributed to the Sparrow.

Mr Julie Anderson, of Melbourne, writing in the *Feathered World*, gives it as his experience that, although the Greenfinch in its wild state has no natural song—just one long, plaintive note—when reared with a Canary, a better songster could not be found. And our Melbourne cousin is not far wrong, for a Greenfinch in my possession, caught in its wild state, endeared itself to the members of my household by uttering an exceedingly pleasing and musical song. I have also heard the bird singing not at all distastefully when in a wild state, and it is one of the few British birds which sings on the wing.

The breeding season is any time from April onwards, and the situations chosen are similar to those of the Chaffinch. The nest is somewhat like that of the last-mentioned species, but is much larger and not nearly so tidy; it also resembles that of the Canary. It is composed of grass and moss; roots also are often utilised.

I do not know that any of the smaller birds lay such various-sized and coloured eggs as the bird before us. They generally number four to six, and I have had them as small as those of the Chaffinch and as large as the Hawfinch. The best description is white, suffused with a bluish tinge, and with reddish or purple spots and streaks, intermingled with some of a darker shade. I have seen very pointed eggs as well as very round ones.

The plumage can be disposed of briefly; yellowish-green with variegations of yellow and ash-grey. The length is six inches.

Black Grouse

LII.—GREENSHANK (*Totanus canescens*).

WE have only two "Shanks" breeding in the British Isles, the Greenshank and the Redshank. We are now concerned with the former, called also the Greater Plover, Green-shanked Godwit, Green-legged Horseman, and Cinereous Godwit.

It is by no means a common species, being unknown even to a great many naturalists. Scotland is the only locality in our island where the Greenshank breeds, and I believe that there it is extending its range.

In form and shape it certainly is very much akin to the Godwits, but I hardly see why it should be called a Greater Plover unless it is because of its long legs. It is a shy and alert bird, and often rises into the air when the observer is some distance away, and acts in a similar manner to the Curlew as a sentinel to all the feathered race within hearing of its clamorous cries.

It is found inhabiting the coast and also inland; the nest, which is built towards the end of May, being placed in a depression on the ground, or an exposed heathy moor near some mountain. Sometimes the nest is close to water, at others far away. The structure consists of a few leaves, heather twigs, and dry grass blades.

The four eggs are a warm stone colour, or cream-white, blotched with purplish-grey and spotted with brown.

The cry is of a clamorous description, and the food consists of worms, insects, and the like.

It has a greyish-white head and neck, with streaks of blackish-brown; almost black mantle and secondaries; white rump and tail-feathers, the latter with dusky brown mottlings and bars; white under parts with streaks and spots of ash-brown; olive-green legs and feet. The plumage in winter is greyer above and pure white underneath. The bird is fourteen inches long.

LIII.—GROUSE, BLACK (*Tetrao tetrix*).

THIS Grouse, called also the Black Cock, Black Game, Grey Hen (female), Heath Poult (female), and Killockie, is

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handsome as seen on its native moors and heaths, not when suspended by a dirty piece of string in some poulterer's shop.

Unlike the Red Grouse, this bird and the Capercaillie inhabit woods, and is polygamous and pugnacious. Each cock secures as many females as possible, partly by dancing, singing, fighting with his rivals, and other performances. It is interesting to notice, however, that he forsakes his erstwhile partners at the earliest opportunity.

It is chiefly in the north that this beautiful Grouse is found, and it seems somewhat unaccountable why it has entirely disappeared from many of its more southern breeding grounds. It is still found, I believe, in some parts of Hampshire, Somerset and Devonshire, and also Staffordshire and North Wales. Montagu observes that the reason for its disappearance from many of its breeding stations in the south is because of the increase in population and culture, but this can hardly be accountable in every instance, for I know some districts where neither population nor agriculture can be regarded as having driven the bird away.

The Black Grouse is somewhat similar to the Capercaillie but much smaller, and the formation of the tail-feathers in the former are entirely different to those of the latter. The tail-feathers of the Grouse now receiving attention, at least the outermost rectrices, are curved outwards, and these adorn the caps of the London Scottish, but are rarely worn by Highlanders in their native country.

The nesting period is April, May and June, and the nest consists of a sprinkling of heath, ling, grass or fern. It has not much of the appearance of a nest, and is placed in a mere depression in the ground on some wild moorland or mountain heath. It is usually hidden by brambles, heather, fern, and other herbage.

From seven to nine or ten eggs are laid. The ground shade is less warm than in those of the Capercaillie, but with larger and brighter coloured spots and blotches.

The food consists of grain, insects, berries, buds and the like, while the note is described as follows:—"Call, male, 'cooing,' followed by 'hissing,' otherwise 'crow' (likened to the whetting of a scythe). Female's response, 'cooing' (plaintive)."

Bluish-black is the general colour, with a tinge of brown

Red Grouse

on upper parts ; across the wings there is a bar of white ; the tail is black. Scarlet wattles above the eyes, and hazel irides. Length from twenty to twenty-three inches. The full-grown female is not so large as the male, and is similar to the Capercaillie in colouring, whilst the tail is not forked.

LIV.—GROUSE, RED (*Lagopus scoticus*).

It seems an extraordinary statement, but it is no less true, that the Red Grouse is not found in any other part of the world than Britain. It is the sole representative we have in this respect, and more than this, it is such a beautiful bird that the open moors, which it frequents, never resorting to woods, would lose much of their charm if it were absent. Our Red Grouse has apparently a near relative or two in other countries, and a writer in the *Scotsman* very cleverly sketches a life history of the bird as under:—

“The Red Grouse is perhaps more thought about, spoken about, and written about than any other bird in the British Islands—especially on the eve of the Twelfth. The quality of his flesh, though inferior, it is said, to that of his Continental relative the Hazel-hen, is, of course, sufficient to account for a great deal of interest the public take in him ; but the sport he affords is probably more important. His supremacy in this respect may be referred to several causes. His habitat, ‘the moors,’ annually familiar as a newspaper heading, itself attracts the sportsman. Hardly elsewhere can he find nature so undisturbed by man. But the Grouse himself has distinguished qualities to which much of his popularity is due. According to some he is the most beautiful of British birds. Others admire him for his high intellectual attainments. To all this there must be added a certain national pride in a bird found in no other country ; and in Britain the Red Grouse is in this respect unique.

“Although the British bird is sufficiently distinct to be unhesitatingly awarded the rank of an independent species, he closely resembles the Willow Grouse, an inhabitant of the northern portions of Europe, Asia and North America. This bird, unlike the Red Grouse, turns white in winter ; but in summer the white wing quills of the Willow Grouse

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form the only difference in plumage between the two species, except that the back of the cock and the whole of the hen are somewhat lighter in colour than in the British bird. When it is remembered that both vary considerably, locally and otherwise, it will be acknowledged that the difference is very slight. Anatomically, no distinction can be found. The eggs are also precisely alike, and the call of the Willow Grouse differs only in being higher in pitch. There are, however, some differences in habits. The Red Grouse, as is well known, lives, except where it has acquired a taste for grain, almost exclusively on shoots of heather and heath, though it also eats the berries of various moorland plants. The Willow Grouse prefers to inhabit birch and willow scrub, and eats, besides berries, the shoots of these plants.

"There can be no doubt that these facts point to a common ancestor within comparatively recent times. The question has been suggested whether the Red or the Willow Grouse best represents that ancestor. It may be that the white winter plumage has been acquired by the Willow Grouse since the divergence of the two species; or it may have been lost by the Red Grouse. On the whole, the latter seems the more probable. Some light seems to be thrown on the question by some curious facts in connection with variation and moulting in the Red Grouse, and its altered habits and appearance in severe winters.

"The Grouse is one of the most variable birds known. The variation seems to depend to some extent on locality, there being great uniformity, for instance, among Irish specimens which are almost always duller and more snuff-coloured than others; but frequently the most divergent types have been found living close together. Mr Ogilvie-Grant, the chief authority on this subject, distinguishes three types of plumage in the male bird—red, black, and white-spotted—and in the female the same types, with the addition of buff-spotted and buff-barred forms. Combinations, moreover, of two or more types are found, indeed more commonly than the pure types. It is important to note that this variation is greatest in winter.

"The Red Grouse is unique in that the male and female moult at different seasons, the male in autumn and winter, the female in summer and autumn. In the other species of the same genus there are three moults, the

Red Grouse

winter plumage in all being white for both male and female. It is natural to suppose that the winter moult has been discontinued; but it is not obvious why the male should assume his summer plumage in the preceding winter while the female is wearing her old autumn dress.

“The differences between the Willow Grouse and the Red Grouse are all evidently such as can be explained by differences of climate or conditions. The Willow Grouse inhabits colder countries, and therefore becomes white in winter; while the same reason, or, as in America, the absence of heather, confines him to ground not too high to bear trees and thus determines his food and his habitat. There are indications that if the British climate became colder the Red Grouse would resume the white feathers that he has almost entirely lost. In severe winters he often returns to the habit, still retained by the Willow Grouse, of feeding and roosting in trees.

“There is in Scotland an allied species, the Ptarmigan, that resembles all the other members of the genus, except the Red Grouse, in its winter plumage. Indeed it is difficult to distinguish it in its winter dress from the Willow Grouse, to which species most of the so-called Ptarmigan of the poulterer belong. The cock Ptarmigan, however, may be recognised by the black stripes on the face which are absent in the Willow Grouse. Why the Red Grouse should have found it necessary to give up his white winter plumage, while in the Ptarmigan inhabiting the same country, even the red patch of skin across the eye becomes white, is best explained by considering the range of the two birds in Great Britain, and that of the Ptarmigan elsewhere. The Red Grouse is found on moors throughout Scotland and its islands, with the exception of the Shetlands, where it has been introduced, but does not thrive. It is generally distributed in Ireland, where it is decreasing, and in the north of England as far south as Derbyshire, as well as in Wales and Monmouth.”

After this excellent character sketch little remains to be added. So far as I know, the bird has only three local names, namely, Moor Cock, Muire Fowl, and Red Game.

It breeds earlier than the Black Grouse, March to June covering the breeding season. The nest, if such it can be

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called, is placed in a slight hollow under a tuft of herbage. If any materials are used for nesting purposes they are similar to those of the last-named bird, with the addition of perhaps a few feathers and dry grasses. The number of eggs varies considerably; from six to seven up to twelve or fourteen, but the average may be taken at about eight or nine. Some are of a yellowish shade, and others of a bloodstain-red, mottled and blotched with rich umber-brown, and the paler ones with shades of light brown.

The staple food is young heather shoots, and on these the young are fed. A few caterpillars and insects may also be taken.

I am indebted to a *Dictionary of Bird Notes* for the following with regard to its vocal powers:—"Call, crow of male, 'cabow, cabow, cabeck, cabeck, beck, beck'; 'cock-away, cockaway,' or 'go-bac, go-bac-bac-bac' (harsh). Female, 'yow, yow, yow' (with peculiar nasal catch). Male, alarm, 'cock, cock, cock.'

As has been mentioned in the sketch of the last species dealt with, the Red Grouse is not polygamous but is strictly monogamous, which I may state means that it has only one partner. To her the male is much attached, and so it should be, for the courting or pairing days are of a very lovable and demonstrative character. In these escapades the male actually endeavours to endear himself to the female by a series of powerful ringing notes, which I suppose is none other than a love song. Here, then, we have an example of a brightly-plumed bird attracting the attention of a partner not only on account of his plumage but also by the aid of his vocal powers, for be it said that it is a noticeable fact that where birds are of a bright and attractive plumage, the vocal powers are not as a rule of a very high order; thus the most attractive male generally gets the day, whereas in those species of a plain livery, generally possessing, however, brilliant melodies of song, the most capable songster usually comes off triumphant. These observations have latterly been made by many competent naturalists, and there seems to be much truth in such statements.

The plumage is reddish-brown on head and neck, and chestnut-brown, with bars and specks of black above; almost black on breast, with tips of white. During the summer the general colour is lighter, whilst in winter the

Black Guillemot

under parts are often mottled with white. The length is sixteen inches, and the female bird is more reddish-yellow than her mate.

LV.—GUILLEMOT, BLACK (*Uria grylle*).

At this juncture in our alphabetical list there begins and runs consecutively the Guillemots and the Gulls, and as they all, more or less, frequent the same localities and their habits too are extremely similar, a short description must suffice. Much that I write in regard to the Common Guillemot also applies to the present member of the Guillemot family and also to several of the Gulls.

The bird now receiving attention has a variety of local names, and amongst them may be mentioned those of Scaber, Scout, Sea Pigeon, Sea Turtle, Strany, Teiste, Tinker's Hue, Toist, Dovekie, and Greenland Dove, whilst a certain variety of the bird is called the Spotted Guillemot.

Of the two Guillemots, the Common Guillemot is much more abundant than the Black species, and its name does not belie it. The present bird is confined almost exclusively as a breeder to the west coast of Scotland and the north and west coasts of Ireland. In its habits the Black Guillemot is not so gregarious as its Common relative, and it resorts to the seas in the neighbourhood of its breeding grounds all the year through.

It breeds towards the latter part of May to the end of June, placing its two eggs—Montagu erroneously states one only—in a hole or crevice in the rocks, or underneath a rock on the soil. They are generally white in colour, more or less tinged with blue, speckled, spotted, and blotched or marbled with chestnut-brown, very dark brown, and a kind of neutral tint.

Fish constitute the food.

The call is a plaintive whistle, and a grunt on the cliffs.

It cannot possibly be mistaken for any other British breeding bird, the plumage being wholly black, with the exception of some of the wing-coverts and secondary quills, which are tipped with white. The bill is black and the legs are red. It is fourteen inches in length.

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LVI.—GUILLEMOT, COMMON (*Lomvia troile*).

THE Common Guillemot, like its last-mentioned relative, possesses a variety of names, such as Foolish Guillemot, Kiddaw, Lary, Scout, Sea Hen, Tinkershire, Willock (young), etc.

One interesting and curious fact connected with the history of this bird is that its egg varies in colour more than any other Britisher, and no two are said to be alike. Mr Oxley Grabham has contributed to the *Spectator* a most interesting account of the sea birds which breed on the high cliffs between Filey and Flamborough Head in Yorkshire. The writer touches on the subject of this egg variation in the course of his interesting contribution, and from it I extract the following :—"Several different species of sea-fowl breed in these cliffs—Herring Gulls, Kittiwakes, Puffins, Razorbills and Guillemots—but the vast majority of the birds are of the latter species, and are there literally in thousands. They are locally known as 'Scouts,' and sit on the ledges bowing to each other, and keeping up a murmuring noise that may be heard a long distance off. Their large pear-shaped egg is well known, and by a wise provision of Nature it is so shaped, for on these wind-swept ledges, where it is laid without any attempt at a nest, if it were rounded like the eggs of most other birds it would have little chance of ever coming to maturity. Most people are familiar with these wonderfully handsome eggs, presenting such variety of colouring that two are hardly ever alike. I knew of a collection of a thousand of these eggs, everyone different from the other. It has often been a puzzle to me to account for this wonderful variability—handsome reds, blues, greens, yellows, chocolates, whites, every shade of the spectrum, spotted and unspotted. The birds are living under the same conditions, eating the same food, and are spread over a wide area. Not, as on the pinnacles in the Farne Islands, crowded together in a dense mass on the top of one rock, where a little difference in colour may help to guide each individual bird back to her own egg; and that they do recognise and keep to their own eggs has been proved by splashing particular birds with paint. A Guillemot only lays one egg; if that be taken she always lays another, and if this again be taken



COMMON GUILLEMOTS.

Common Guillemot

she will sometimes, but not always, lay a third. And another curious thing is that the same bird nearly always lays the same type of egg, so that if the climbers find a handsomely-marked one on a particular ledge they always go again for a similar one; and I know of a case where this has been done for fourteen years in succession, this particular egg always having a certain peculiar roughness of its own. The eggs form a staple article of food in the district during the season; personally I like them, but many people consider them strong. The best way to cook them is to boil them hard—like a Plover's—cut them in slices, spread a little anchovy on them, and serve with mustard and cress. Great numbers are sent to Leeds to be used in the working of patent leather, and all the best-marked specimens are reserved for collectors. I have known as much as ten shillings paid for an egg on the cliff-top. Another interesting thing about them is that it is not known exactly how the old birds take their young from the ledges down to the water; some remain until they can flutter down, but many are conveyed by their parents. The cliff-climbers will tell you that they take the young down on their backs, but this is certainly not the case. I have been many times both on the cliff top and in a boat below armed with a powerful field-glass, and, though I have seen the young bird drop from the old one, I cannot tell exactly how the former is held. My own opinion is that the young bird is held pressed up between the body and legs of the old one so that it is impossible to see it."

The Common Guillemot breeds from the middle of May onwards, placing its one egg—it will be noticed that the Black species lays two or three but the "Common" only one—on the bare ledges of rocky sea cliffs. I can best describe the colouring by stating that they are all shades, from nearly or quite white to a dark green, some profusely spotted and blotched and streaked with dark colours, others very slightly so, or hardly at all.

Sprats and other fish go to make up the diet, and in this respect the writer I have already quoted writes:—"The number of small fish, chiefly herring sile, on which these birds feed, and on which they bring up their young, must be vast indeed, but from an economic point of view I could never learn that they did any appreciable harm. These small fish must be present in millions; you can often

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see great oily patches in the water where they are congregated. I have often watched the old birds coming into the cliffs with their prey. They will sometimes bring nearly a dozen small fish at a time, all held just behind the head with their bodies and tails hanging down all on one side. Now, how do the birds arrange this? They could hardly catch them all at once in this manner, and if they opened their beaks to complete the catch one would have supposed that those first caught would have dropped out, unless it be that they bite so hard that they stick, as it were, to the bill as caught, and remain there."

Hudson describes the voice thus:—"A hoarse, long-drawn cry, like the beginning of a dog's howl before he has cleared his voice; also a succession of laughter-like notes, and other sounds resembling the cries, guttural and clear, of the Black-headed Gull; and sometimes short, barking notes like those of the Geese and Sheldrakes."

This bird is a very near relative of the Razorbill; it dives, swims and flies in a very similar manner, but the two species differ considerably in plumage, and the beak of this bird is straight and sharp, whilst that of the Razorbill is axe-like.

Unlike the Black Guillemot the one now receiving attention forsakes its breeding grounds when that important season is over, and resorts to other parts of the sea coast. It is generally distributed all round our coast line, but there are localities where it literally teems in thousands, such as the district named by Mr Oxley Grabham.

It is four inches longer than the Black Guillemot; the head, neck and upper parts are blackish-brown, and the under parts white.

LVII.—GULL, BLACK-HEADED (*Larus ridibundus*).

TRULY has one writer stated that Gulls, like Rooks, often follow the plough for the grubs; as indefatigable scavengers they save our seaports from pestilence; to fishermen they point out the shoals of fish; and to the mist-bound mariner they scream a warning from the cliffs on the half-hidden rocks at sea.

We are rich in Gulls, for we have no less, than six

Black-headed Gull

species breeding with us. Of these, the Black-headed Gull is perhaps the most known to those inland, for it not only frequents the sea coast, but takes up its station on inland waters, and often, as has been stated, resorts to ploughed lands in search of grubs and the like.

One of the most famous breeding places in this country of the Gull now receiving attention is at Scoulton Mere, which has been in existence from time immemorial. Some idea of the swarms of these birds which assemble there every year may be gathered from the fact that ten thousand to twenty thousand eggs have been obtained in different seasons, whilst on one occasion, when the birds had been left unmolested for an entire summer, the total rose to forty thousand. Although the Gull which follows the present species is termed the "Common Gull," there is considerable doubt as to whether it is more common than the Black-headed bird. True enough it is that during the winter it is a difficult matter to distinguish the present species from its "Common" relative, but in the spring the black or brownish head is a very conspicuous feature, and then the bird cannot possibly be mistaken for any other.

This Gull has a variety of local names, such as Blackcap, Brown Gull, Crocker, Hooded Maw, Masked Gull, Mire Crow, Red Legs, Rickim-re, Sea Crow, and Scoulton Gull; the latter name probably owes its origin to the birds' existence in such numbers at Scoulton Mere, already alluded to.

The breeding season is April, May, and sometimes June, and the soft, marshy ground at the edge of lakes and other waters—where the nest is placed in a slight hollow—or on an island on some lake, are the situations chosen. It is most frequently found in the neighbourhood of the sea. The nest is built of sedge, or dead or decaying grasses. Three eggs are laid, and these at times have a ground colour of light blue or yellow, at others green, red or brown. Some are covered thickly with spots and blotches, others are hardly marked at all.

As previously stated, Gulls are of inestimable value in clearing away offal, and several of the family follow the plough after insects, grubs, etc., indeed the Rev. J. G.

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Wood remarks that the success of agriculture near many parts of the coast is undoubtedly due, in great measure, to the ceaseless efforts of these valuable birds, and Canon Tristran states that "no Gull ever feeds on any vegetable matter, whether seeds, buds or fruit. They are especially partial to snails, breaking their shells on stones." Fish also has to be added to the bill of fare, the birds being especially fond of sprats.

The vocal powers of this bird are by no means of a high order; it is sometimes called the Laughing Gull, owing to the voice somewhat resembling a mirth-provoking sound.

This Gull has a red bill and feet; blackish-brown head and upper neck; grey mantle; rest of plumage white, with a tinge of pink underneath. The black head is missing in winter. It is sixteen inches in length.

LVIII.—GULL, COMMON (*Larus canus*).

As has been stated in the sketch of the last bird, the present "Common" species is not so plentiful as its name indicates, but at the same time it is by no means uncommon. It is the bird under review which suffers mostly, I think, from holiday cruelty. That is, many of these beautiful creatures are shot at the seaside by holiday makers, and apparently for no other reason than that of killing. As has been stated by a writer in one of the London dailies:—"A good deal of the sentiment expended on the subject of the destruction of bird life has been unreal. Bustards are now not commonly slaughtered, Ostrich feathers are extracted without harm or pain to the bird, some of the hat adornments which masquerade as feathers never winged their way through the air, and several of the slaughtered innocents were themselves in life more cruel than the men who killed them. But when all due subtraction has been made for the chronic ignorance of sentimentality, there remains some unsportsmanlike cruelties that even the perpetrators could not in cold blood appreciate. There is especially one form of objectless destruction that comes into prominence with every summer holiday season. It is the wanton shooting of

Common Gull

sea birds. Even in the quieter corners of the land—in South Wales and Cornwall—it is a common sight to see men shooting from the cliffs at Gulls as they pass by and letting the wounded birds drop into the sea and often swim out painfully into the deep, without even a thought of putting them out of their misery. The Gulls themselves help to render more easy and more cruel the business of the man with the gun, for they always gather round a wounded comrade. In watching them shot under such conditions it is difficult not to wish for a repetition of the punishment of the Ancient Mariner."

Much cannot be said about this species that has not already been included in the sketch of the Black-headed Gull, but the former has quite a formidable list of local names. The mention of the chief of these must suffice: Coddy Moddy (young), Mew (immature), Marrott, Sea Cob, Sea Gull, Sea Maw, Sea Mall, Storm Gull, White-footed Gull, Winter Bonnet, Winter Gull (young), Winter Mew (young), and Phirgie.

The breeding stations are somewhat similar to those of the Black-headed Gull, on the shores of some low, grassy island, near the sea; in deep bays, lochs, inland lakes, but not very frequently on cliffs.

Plants found by the seashore, seaweed, dry grass, heather, stalks, etc., go to make up the nest, which is usually of good size. The two or three eggs have for a ground colour light blue or straw-colour, others green or brown; some resemble the eggs of the Oystercatcher, others are spotted all over. Again, there are others which are sufficiently well blotched and spotted with ash colour and dark brown; others well streaked with the brown, but with only a few spots of the ash colour. The breeding season is May and June.

It seems almost incredible that a bird only eighteen and a half inches long should devour and stow away within its body an eel a foot long, yet Montagu states that he frequently witnessed it. It follows the plough for worms and grubs, and over marshes, moors and pasture lands for insects, small vertebrates and carrion. When these fail it will then partake of grain. It is especially fond of the larvæ of the chafer (*Scarabæus melolontha*).

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The call is a clamorous "yak," and a laughing "luka, luka, luka," "kyah," and "kree."

The base of the bill is greenish, with a yellow tip; greenish-yellow legs and feet; ash-grey mantle; black on two first primaries, with a patch of white near the extremity, the remainder black towards the end; white head, neck, tail and under parts. Length, eighteen and a half inches.

LIX.—GULL, GREAT BLACK-BACKED (*Larus marinus*).

THIS Gull is the largest of the six breeding in our country, being thirty inches in length, exceeding the Herring Gull by six inches. For some time this bird and the Lesser Black-backed Gull were confounded, but they are undoubtedly distinct species. Besides being the largest Gull in Britain it is also the rarest, and the breeding sites are mostly confined to Scotland. There are others in England, Ireland and Wales, but it cannot be said to be plentiful anywhere. Unlike the two previous Gulls the present species is far more fond of the sea, and is more often met with a great distance from land. Here it finds, and apparently relishes, dead animal matter floating on the sea, but the bird is also a plunderer, and its formidable size renders this doubly easy. It plunders the nests of other sea birds for their eggs and young, and in this respect may be said to do considerable damage.

From Sir Edwardes Moss's delightful little volume, *A Year in Sutherlandshire*, the following will be read with interest:—"Backwards and forwards, over and along the cliffs, float and sweep hundreds of Gulls, from the little Black-headed Gull, who, having reared his young ones, will soon be off and away to other climes, to the big Black Back, great robber that he is—all's fish that comes to his net. . . . Go on the moor in spring and you may see him and his mate quartering the ground like a brace of pointers, and woe betide the luckless Grouse whose nest meets his eye—eggs and young birds—all will be taken."

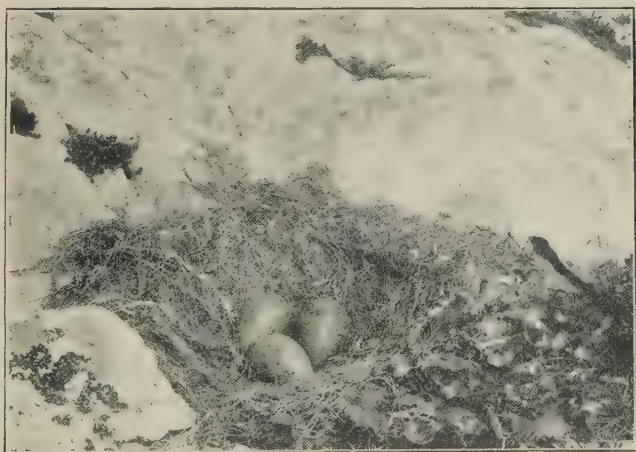
The nesting sites are the same, at times, as those of the two last-mentioned Gulls, but with the addition of on the ground, or in an almost inaccessible position on the top of a

Great Black-backed Gull

flat-topped rock or cliff. The breeding season is also similar. The materials used are the same as those of the Common Gull, but with a lining occasionally of a few feathers or sheep's wool.

The eggs, which are generally three in number, resemble those of the Herring Gull, but are to be recognised by the larger masses of surface colouring, and by being a trifle larger.

This Gull does not possess by any means so formidable a



NEST AND EGGS OF GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL.

list of localisations as the last named, the ones which specially call for mention being: Black-back, Brown and White Gull (young), Cob, Cob Farapack, Great Black and White Gull, Swabie, Swat-back, and Wagel.

The call is loud and frequently repeated—"ag-ag," and a yelping "kyauk."

The Great Black-backed Gull has a yellow bill; flesh-coloured legs and feet; rest of plumage as in the case of the Lesser Black-backed species. Length, thirty inches.

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LX.—GULL, HERRING (*Larus argentatus*).

THIS bird derived its name from following the shoals of herrings. It also feeds on marine animals, dead and alive, and garbage of all kinds. It is a plunderer like the last-mentioned species. More than this, insects, worms and grubs, which it obtains in a like manner to the Black-headed Gull, are also eaten. Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart., informs me that this Gull “commits sore ravages on salmon smolts descending our rivers in May and June.” It is called the Cat Gull, Scorey, Silvery Gull, and Yellow-legged Gull.

It is fairly common all round our coasts, and Montagu states that “there are fifty Herring Gulls to one of the Lesser Black-backed; and five hundred at least, perhaps a thousand, to one of the Larger Black-backed Gulls.”

The breeding season is identical with that of the Great Black-backed, and the situations chosen are the ledges of rocks and grassy localities by the cliff-sides. The nest is made up of seaweed and grasses.

The three eggs are similar to those of the Lesser Black-backed Gull, the only difference being that those of the Herring Gull are somewhat longer, and the blotches, of the surface colour, are of a more confluent character.

Mr Hett compares the call to “ak-ak,” “cou-l-ooë”; “hak-hak-hak” or “hau-hau-hau”; “croak,” and “pee wheel,” alarm, “ky-eok,” repeated quickly several times, more especially when disturbed at nesting places, not often otherwise.

All the Gulls in Britain, with the exception of the first one on our list—the Black-headed—have yellow bills or greenish-yellow; the legs and feet are of the same colour as the Great Black-backed; grey mantle; white head, tail and lower parts: outermost primaries black. Length, twenty-four inches.

LXI.—GULL, KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*).

ALTHOUGH the least in size of any of the six Gulls, this pretty and attractive bird is, or rather should be, held high in our estimation. No more pleasing sight presents itself to

Kittiwake Gull

the bird lover than that of a colony of Kittiwakes—the huge rocks setting off to perfection the beautiful white parts of the bird, like so many moving snowballs against an iron-grey sky. The Kittiwake is fairly well distributed round our coast, that is, wherever rocky crags and precipices are found. I am able to give only three local names—Annet, Tarrock (young and immature), and Waeg.

Apparently the Kittiwake feeds exclusively on small fish. In its manner of catching its prey it much resembles the beautiful Terns, darting down with unerring accuracy of aim and capturing its prize.

It is a late breeder, the latter part of May or the beginning of June being the usual season, and in this respect the Kittiwake may be said to be unfortunate, in this wise—young are often about when the close season for sea birds is at an end, and then it is that the “scoundrels who practise this form of sport,” as Hudson says, are quite at liberty to do just whatever they please. The Lesser Black-backed Gull too has a similar breeding season, and suffers in a like manner. In the case of these two birds at any rate the close season should be extended, for they are too valuable an ornament and a delight to all frequenters of the rocky parts of our coast to be slaughtered in the manner indicated.

The nest, which consists of marine vegetation of various kinds, with a dry grass lining, is placed on the ledges of precipitous rocky sea cliffs. It is not a particularly clean nest by any means, a remark which applies to a great many sea birds, but for which there is a good deal of explanation.

The three eggs are stone-coloured, or tinged with an olive shade, others have a bluish cast. They are spotted and blotched with ash-grey, and two or three shades of brown, chestnut to umber.

This is one of the very few British birds whose name indicates its note—Kitty-a-wake. It is composed of three notes, two more quickly uttered than the third, and one long. It has also been compared to “ah-get-away, get-away,” and the call to “kitta-aa, kitta-aa.”

Bill greenish-yellow; black legs and feet; deep grey mantle; white head, neck, tail and under parts. Length, fifteen and a half inches.

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LXII.—GULL, LESSER BLACK-BACKED (*Larus fuscus*).

THIS, the remaining Gull on our list, is considerably larger in size than the one last under consideration, being about the same as the Herring Gull. Much cannot be added about the Yellow-legged Gull (young), the only local name I am aware of, that has not been embodied in the sketches of the five species already treated with.

Its breeding season is similar to that of the Kittiwake, but this bird builds its seaweed and grass nest on the ground, in depressions, crevices, and the like, among herbage. It has a partiality for islands in lakes, like others of its species. It is gregarious, and is often found breeding in close proximity to Herring Gulls.

Two or three eggs are laid, and these vary from a warm stone-colour, through shades of brown, to pale green or light olive-green, spotted and blotched, but these also vary much in number, size, position and intensity; neutral tint, chestnut-brown and dark brown being all met with, and occasionally in one and the same specimen.

The food is the usual Gull diet; the voice is laughter-like, yet solemn and desolate; short and long cries.

It is twenty-three inches in length; has a yellow bill, legs and feet; the plumage in summer of the mature bird is white, excepting the mantle, which varies from slate-grey to black.

LXIII.—HARRIER, HEN (*Circus cyaneus*).

THE Hen Harrier, called also the Blue Gled, Blue Hawk, Blue Kite, Dove Hawk, Kattabella, Ringed-tailed Harrier (female), and White Hawk, is more abundant—if the word “abundant” may be written of any one of the three species—than either the Marsh or Montagu’s Harriers, and Charles Dixon suggests the probable reason for this as “its haunts are inaccessible to the multitude.” That well-known writer goes on to state (writing, by the way, in 1897):—“At one time very widely dispersed, it now seems to be confined to the wild moorland districts from Cornwall and Devonshire, through

Hen Harrier

Wales to the Lake District, and thence northwards to the Highlands, the Western Isles, the Orkneys, and the Shetlands." In Ireland it still nests, but very sparingly. There seems but little doubt that in the case of the disappearance of the Harriers the drainage of the fens and waste lands has had much to do with it, but to quote Charles Dixon again, "its disappearance cannot be attributed to such a cause in the moorland and mountain haunts it was known to frequent. Here, as indeed elsewhere, it has been ruthlessly shot down and trapped by gamekeepers and landowners." This slaughter does not seem justifiable. I admit that it takes eggs and nestlings of smaller birds, and has a partiality for chickens, but when it is borne in mind that frogs, lizards, mice, moles and insects are also partaken of in great quantities, there does not seem to be any reason why it should have been persecuted to the extent that it is to be counted as a vanishing species.

The Harriers are well-known for the habit they possess of beating to and fro in a sort of laboured flight after their food. They do not hover like other Hawks, nor indeed do they pursue their prey in the manner of most of those birds, but dart down all unawares, and fly for the most part close to the ground. At other times they are to be seen well up in the air, and nothing which then suits their palate escapes attention. They possess wonderful flight powers, and no exertion whatever appears to be necessary for them to be on the move for hours at a stretch.

The present species breeds in May and June, placing its nest of dry grass and a few twigs on mountain moors, reed patches and cornfields, on the ground. Four to six eggs are laid, bluish-white, sometimes marked with a few rusty spots.

The note is an oft-repeated "ker."

The adult male is bluish-grey above, white underneath; black beak; reddish-brown irides; yellow legs and feet; black claws. The female has reddish-brown above; pale reddish-yellow underneath, with longitudinal streaks and spots of deep orange-brown. Length of male, eighteen inches; female, two inches longer.

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LXIV.—HARRIER, MARSH (*Circus æruginosus*).

MR HUDSON says that this Harrier is now extinct in this country, and cannot be introduced into a work on British Birds which does not include the Great Auk, the Bustard, the Spoonbill, and many other species which have been exterminated in England. Charles Dixon includes it as a vanishing British Bird. I know, however, of a few pairs which still breed in Norfolk, thus it finds a place in our list.

As its name implies, the Harrier now receiving attention resorts to marshes, swamps and like situations, and in its habits closely resembles the Hen Harrier.

It breeds in May, placing its bulky nest of reeds, sedge and sticks on the ground amongst reeds, or even in shallow water. Montagu says he found the nest in a tree. It also places it among fern or furze.

The eggs number from three to six, and are white, milky-white, or bluish-green, sometimes faintly marked with light brown. They are round and rough.

Mice, moles and birds go to make up the food, but it will also strike a young rabbit, and it is said to eat fish.

The note of the male is "koi" or "kai," and of the female "pitz" and "peep" (Naumann).

The local names which may be mentioned are those of Bald Buzzard, Duck Hawk, Dunpickle, March Harrier, Moor Buzzard, Puttock, and White-headed Harpy.

The adult bird has a creamy-white head and nape, with streaks of dark brown; reddish-brown is the remaining colour above, with paler margins to the feathers; black primaries; ash-grey secondaries and tail; chestnut-brown underneath. Length, about twenty-two inches. The female closely resembles her mate, but is a little larger.

LXV.—HARRIER, MONTAGU'S (*Circus cineraceus*).

THE last Harrier with which we have to deal bears the name of that most careful observer—Montagu—inasmuch as he was the first to show that it was a British species, and in his day a good deal of confusion was set right by him in regard to the Harrier family. Although I stated in the history of the Hen Harrier that these birds do not

Montagu's Harrier

hover like several of our Hawks, the Ash-coloured Falcon, or Blue Jacker, two of its local names, will do so, but it appears to be more fond of *terra-firma* than the two others with which we have treated.

Much cannot be said about it that has not already been embodied in the accounts of the two preceding species; the situations frequented are heaths, marshes and commons.

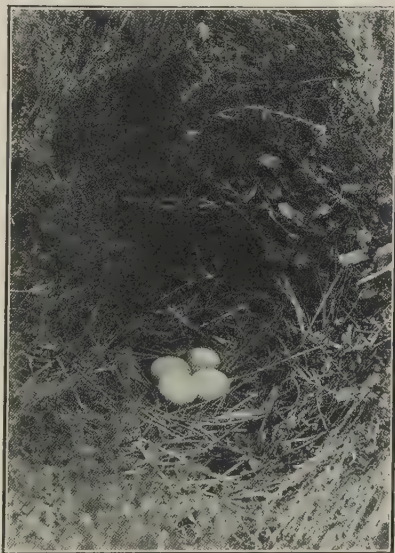
The breeding season is the same as that of the last-named, and the nest is placed amongst heath or furze and, it is said, corn and clover. It consists of dry grass, straws, and a few twigs. The four or five eggs are very similar to those of the Marsh Harrier.

It is a robber of other small birds, their eggs and young, and its diet is also made up of moles, frogs, mice and insects.

The call is a feeble and tremulous "chat-ter," somewhat like that of the Kestrel.

It is a summer visitor to the British Isles, arriving in April.

Bluish-grey above; black primaries; three transverse dark bars on secondaries; the white lateral feathers of the tail are barred with reddish-orange; white underneath, streaked in a varying manner with reddish-orange. The female has various tints of brown above, and pale reddish-yellow below, with bright red streaks of a longitudinal character; black beak; yellow legs and feet. Length, eighteen inches.



NEST AND EGGS OF MONTAGU'S
HARRIER.

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LXVI.—HAWFINCH (*Coccothraustes vulgaris*).

OF the Finches we have in Britain, the Hawfinch is probably the least to be admired as a musician, its note being low and plaintive, though not at all unpleasant. He makes up for his non-musical abilities by being a splendid type of the interesting Finch family, and if I mistake not is the largest in our country. Amongst the local names on my list are those of Cherry Finch, Chuck, Cobble Bird, Common Grosbeak, Ground Wren, Haw Grosbeak, Kate, and Black-throated Grosbeak.

The hand of almost every gardener is against this bird, for they state, and perhaps not without reason, that it destroys their rows of peas, eats their cherries, and does other mischief in the gardens, but it should be remembered that the young are fed exclusively on insects. Other food partaken of consists of berries, seeds of various kinds, such as beech, hornbeam, yew and hawthorn. The powerful conical beak materially assists the Hawfinch to crack the kernels of the hawthorn and other seeds.

The general opinion among ornithologists is that this bird is increasing, and this is to be accounted for I think by its shy and wary disposition. It is extremely quick and vigilant, and it is stated that the persecution meted out to the bird has led to its sharp and shrewd character. It cannot be mistaken for any other British breeding bird, being very attractive in plumage, and the large head, sharp eyes and well-defined beak all add to its appearance.

It breeds in May, placing its nest in bushes, arms of trees, in holly, fir trees, and among ivy bowers, generally from five to twenty-five feet from the ground. The nest is composed of small twigs for the most part, together with stems of plants and lichens, with a lining of hair and roots—not always the former—a loose, but by no means untidy structure.

The three to five eggs are greenish-grey, spotted with brown, and streaked with bluish-black.

Black is the colour on lores, throat and base of bill; reddish-brown cheeks and crown; ashy-grey nape; dark reddish-brown back; black wings, white on great coverts; light purplish-red underneath. Seven inches in length.

Sparrow Hawk

LXVII.—HAWK, SPARROW (*Accipiter nisus*).

NEXT to the Sparrow there has probably been more controversy about this daring Hawk than any other British bird. Now I am not going to write disparagingly of *all* gamekeepers, for I know many intelligent, sensible and discriminating fellows who would no more think of shooting a Sparrow Hawk than flying, but I certainly will say that those who do persecute this bird indiscriminately are wanting in sensibility.

I am not going to paint this Hawk's history in foreign colours—I own it does a great deal of harm—but my contention is, that considered solely from the point of view that it is one of the balance keepers of Nature, it is to be encouraged and protected.

If it had not been for the persecution meted out to the Sparrow Hawk I vouchsafe to say that we should never have had such tempestuous outbursts about the House Sparrow, for the present bird is the natural enemy of the "avian-rat," and would have kept in proper check the Sparrows' numbers over the normal. This one fact is sufficient to convince me of the usefulness of the Hawk, and must not be overlooked in a careful and impartial study of the case.

If dastardly means had not been, and were not now, employed in destroying the Sparrow Hawk, I should not write with so much "feeling," but the barbarous pole-trap has been brought into use, and the very thought sends a shudder to the bird lover's heart, or to the heart of anyone who knows the suffering of any creature caught in the cruel grip of this infamous instrument of torture. I am not writing without reason—having my facts fully before me. I have seen Sparrow Hawks in these ghastly death traps, and I have also seen the most useful of British birds—the Owl—fluttering, and dying a lingering, bleeding death. But what a cruel business this is to be



SPARROW HAWK
($\frac{1}{13}$ Natural Size).

A wild bird photographed
direct from nature.

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sure ; were I a bird persecutor I do not think I should have the heart to cause any bird needless pain by my persecution—I would rather kill it outright than make it suffer untold agony, and a penalty for a crime it had never committed.

Sir Herbert Maxwell writes :—" It has been recognised that without song birds this world would be a far less desirable place of abode ; without insectivorous birds, a far less profitable place for farmers and gardeners ; without birds of brilliant plumage or graceful form and flight, a much less interesting place to spend a holiday. Therefore the legislature has undertaken to protect Nightingales, as long as they do not forget their melody, and do not exchange a diet of caterpillars for one of wheat and strawberries ; and Swallows, as long as they skim about in their own enchanting way, and confine their voracity to insect life. . . . The doctrine of Aristotle that ' animals have no rights,' has been reaffirmed lately under authority of the Church of Rome, and applied in a manner which makes every humane heart burn with indignation. The Pope (Leo XIII.), if he is correctly interpreted, has lent his official sanction to the abominable maxim that it is contrary to the principles of true religion to legislate for the well-being of animals, and an infringement of the rights of Christians." And again :—" To deal rightly and considerately with animals, wild and domestic, the emotions must have their due influence ; the heart must be tender, but it must not rule the head."

One well-known observer remarks that " he protects the food of the people, and destroys a luxury only. Game is a superfluity, corn a necessity, and the Sparrow Hawk's mission is to keep in check such birds as Wood Pigeons, Sparrows, and other small seed-eating birds, of whom the agriculturist complains." Throughout different parts of the year the bird feeds on small birds, moles, mice, young animals, cockchafers, wireworms, slugs, beetles, snakes, voles, etc. In return for this, it will take chickens and other inhabitants of the poultry yard, and game, but surely the fully authenticated list I have given is sufficient to warrant the bird being protected from the hands of these rabid game preservers. " Bring back the Sparrow Hawk " is the cry from many districts, and in these days when literature is brought within the reach of all, and

Sparrow Hawk

there are so many endeavouring to show the good birds do after making a life study of them, it should be no difficult matter to convince people of the fallacy of killing what are really their best friends.

The daring of the Sparrow Hawk, called in some localities the Blue Hawk, Blue Merlin, and Pigeon Hawk, is well known. It has been known to follow its terrified prey into barns, houses and churches, and even through the carriage window of a passenger train, undeterred by the presence of man.

The manner in which this bird captures its prey is well-known; it sails along on majestic wings, then suddenly hovers and is almost motionless. For a moment he seems to hesitate, but having selected his victim out of a flock of chirruping Sparrows in the stubbles below perhaps, he dashes down like a lightning flash and secures the prize. I have seen a Hawk do this in a garden when not half a dozen yards away from me, and have also seen it following up a drive in a wood, then dashing down upon some Pigeon or other creature which happened to be crossing the path.

The voice is a harsh and screaming call, which has been described as representing the word "mew."

It breeds from April to June, the nest being placed in trees and thorn bushes, and the bird occasionally occupies the deserted nest of a Crow; it also builds on rocks and sea cliffs.

In the shallow flat nest of twigs five eggs are laid, which are roundish in shape, and of a whitish tint, blotched, generally at one end but not always, with reddish-brown. The eggs are often pointed at one end, but I have seen many almost oval.

Above, the colouring is dark bluish-grey with a spot of white on the nape; underneath reddish-white, with transverse bars of deep brown; grey tail, barred with brownish-black; blue beak; yellow cere, irides and feet. In the female the upper parts are brown, passing into blackish-grey; underneath greyish white, with dark grey bars. The male is twelve inches in length; female three inches more.

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LXVIII.—HERON (*Ardea cinerea*).

As the reader will have judged, it has been my special care in dealing with the birds included in these sketches to set out the good they do and the protection they need. Out of the whole list I do not know that there is a more interesting or useful bird than the "Old Moll Hern," as country people are so fond of calling the Heron. The following localisations may also be given:—Hanser, Harnsea, Hearinsew, Hegrilskip, Heronshaw, Jack Hern, and Long-necked Heron. What some of the local names given to birds mean, or in what manner they have been allotted, remains a puzzle to me. What, for instance, is the correct interpretation of Hegrilskip? I can find no answer. As to the localisation of Heronshaw: the wood or coppice where Herons built was originally called the Heronshaw, of which Mr Jesse relates an instance in the Heronry in Windsor Great Park. Hence the name was transferred to the bird itself, which was called Heronshaw, and thus the proverb, "He does not know a Hawk from a handsaw," the meaning of which was, that, in a very distant flight, it was only an experienced eye that could distinguish the Hawk from the Heron.

Mr Lodge says:—"Heron are supposed by most people to be very scanty in Britain nowadays, but in the wilds there are still plenty. On certain estuaries on the East Coast one who knows where to look for them may see from a dozen to forty Herons at once, thronging the mellow ooze at low tide in perfect regiments. Essex, and especially Suffolk, hold some of the finest Heronries in Europe, and from these the birds sail to the rim of the tide, day after day, to feed among the rich salt-marshes. The Stour is famous for Herons, and the great Essex Blackwater is one of the chief remaining haunts. Heron-hawking is a sport of the past, but now the lonely marshmen, descendants of the grim Danes that seared the marsh coasts so many years ago, have yet the strong stomachs of their ancestors, and can eat grilled Heron with zest, after a long and skilful stalk up to the long-legged fowl in a stealthy gunning-punt, or a short watch behind the seawall in the foggy dusk. Heronries, of course, are always on private property and well protected in the breeding

Heron

season, but fowlers take their just toll from the hordes that visit the sea."

These are extremely shy birds, and it is with difficulty they are approached. The Falcon is the ever-watchful enemy of the Heron, but sometimes the latter bird has been known to kill the Falcon by throwing back its head and receiving its enemy on the point of its sharp beak and transfixing it by its own impetus.

I well remember watching a fine old cock Heron that took up its position within a few yards of me whilst I was observing a Kingfisher. The bird did not see me, and it stood in the middle of the stream of clear water, where cattle were very fond of coming to quench their thirst. The little fish would get quite into the shallow water for warmth, no doubt, and the wary bird stood motionless, observing the finny tribe until they were thick enough for his ideas and purposes. He then spread open his wings and beat the water with them to keep the fish back in the shallows, whilst he gobbled them up as fast as he could till he had made a good meal. It is not as a fish eater, however, that the Heron is of service, for I have seen rats and mice destroyed wholesale by the bird. In its bill of fare is also included insects, snails and reptiles.

Two stories about the feeding of this bird may be told. The first is that of an extraordinary scene witnessed in 1899 in the grounds of Milton Park, at Peterborough: A Heron, which had been fishing in a pond near Milton House, captured a fine fish, which it brought up struggling at the end of its long bill, when another Heron, which had been watching from the shore, plunged into the water and tried to take away the fish. A desperate combat ensued, as both birds were full grown, powerful and majestic. They fought with both bill and wing, dealing out hard knocks rapidly, and uttering shrieks of anger. So furiously raged the duel that the combatants raised quite a cloud of feathers round them. Suddenly one rolled over, and the other, uttering a victorious "frank," the Heron's peculiar cry, and gathering up its long legs, soared to the trees, where it began preening its disordered plumes. An examination proved that the other bird had been killed outright, and it was the would-be robber, too. Now for another incident, which also ended fatally: The body of a Heron floated down stream into Shewalton dam, at the

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mill, on the river Irvine, Ayrshire, and was picked up by the miller. It was evident from the appearance of the bird's throat that it had been choked by something which it had been trying to swallow, and the miller, gradually working the obstructing body back towards the bird's mouth, was at length able to draw from it the body of a rat. It had gone down head first, and, sticking in the gullet, had choked the Heron.

Heron build in companies, which are called Heronries, and these are nearly always to be found on private property, for people prize their Heronries in the same manner as Rookeries.

The nests, which are built from March onwards, are placed in the topmost branches of high trees, and are not unlike, curious to relate, those of the Rook, but flatter, broader and larger. Three or four eggs are laid, and these are of an uniform dull greenish-blue.

The distance these birds travel to their feeding grounds is enormous, and I know that they fly daily from Hurstmonceaux in Sussex to the coast of France to feed, and back again towards evening. They also feed at night.

The note is a powerful cry, not at all unlike the harsh alarm-cry of the Peacock.

It has a bluish-black crest; slate-grey above; white forehead, cheeks and neck, with streaks of bluish-grey, terminating with long white feathers on the latter; greyish-white underneath; yellow bill. Thirty-six inches in length.

LXIX.—JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*).

THE Jackdaw has very few local names as he is too well known to be called anything except Daw, Jack, and Kae, and he is one of the few birds in Britain on the increase.

I know some districts where this bird is very numerous, others where it is never seen and this *not* because the surroundings are unsuitable. How is this to be explained? Only a few days since I saw a large flock of these birds—which seem to agree very amicably with the Rooks—shouting and “jacking” for their very lives. A gamekeeper on a large estate was with me at the time, and I pointed them out to him. “Bless you, sir,” he said, “we have Jackdaws and Magpies here in

Jackdaw

plenty." "Do you shoot them or persecute them in any way?" I asked. "Oh, no, sir," he replied, "I persecute nothing which I *know* is *not* vermin. They of course do damage to game, but then you must consider what they feed on besides—there is no doubt they do more good than harm." This is a thoroughly genuine account of a conversation held with a gamekeeper of forty years' experience.

The Jackdaw does not commit such plunder amongst the eggs and young of game as the thievish Pie, although he will take fruit and peas; his food consisting for the most part of offal of all kinds, mice, young birds, small insects, reptiles, seeds, worms and grubs. It is extremely fond of house flies, devouring a score one after the other, and then looking for more. I have not found the bird to be as fond of worms as some writers assert to be the case. Besides house flies, the Jackdaw is very fond of perching on the backs of cattle after the ticks and cattle flies. I consider that the toll taken in fruit, peas and game is amply repaid by the inestimable boon the bird confers on cattle. These beasts seem to look upon the bird rather in the light of a good Samaritan, and I have never yet seen cattle resent the bird's interference. What a study for the snap-shottist the scene I have mentioned would be! I long to see a reproduction of such a study, for it is one of the most charming instances of animal affection, and one of the most delightful of rural scenes. To see one of these birds entomologising on the backs of sheep, cows and other cattle is a sight which no true lover of animals can fail to admire. He is a demon after the horse bot fly and the sheep bot fly, and others.

The note of the bird in its wild state is a mere "jack," but to me it is decidedly musical and ringing.

How gracefully the Daw flies too! Now gambolling, now circling, now shooting upward, then falling, screaming the whole time. All birds are intelligent—Britishers at any rate—but the present one when kept as a pet seems to be more of an imp than a bird, so artful, cunning, discriminating, and perceptive.

As to its speaking powers, it is a marvel, like the Jay and Magpie, and I wish to say here that it is a cruel and unwise operation to cut the tongue of this or any other bird for the so-called purpose of making it articulate more plainly. It does no such thing.

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The breeding season is May and June, and the sites chosen are old church and other towers, chimneys, ruins, rocks, cliffs, hollow trees, and so on, sometimes in the burrows of rabbits. At times it is a very large structure, consisting of dry grass, sticks, straw, feathers, shavings, leaves, wool, and other substances. It will pull wool from a sheep's back, and where there is a deer park I have found all the nests in the neighbourhood lined with the hair of the deer, which is obtained by the Daw perching on the animal's back.

The three to six eggs are pale bluish-white, well spotted with ash-colour, and light and dark brown. Sometimes these spots are black, but although I have seen some hundreds of eggs they do not appear to me to vary nearly so much in their markings as a great many British birds' eggs do.

Black, with violet reflections, is the colour of the crown and upper parts; grey on back of head and nape; white iris; dull black underneath. It is fourteen inches in length.

LXX.—JAY (*Garrulus glandarius*).

WHAT a loss it would be if, when rambling through some woodland glade, the sharp, clear-ringing cry of the artful Jay were not to be heard, or if, when walking along a drive or thick coppice path, this bird did not scamper across in its eagerness to escape into the thick, impenetrable thicket! The first thing I listen for on entering a thick copse is the alarm-note of this extremely interesting bird. "Kak-kak-kak," shouts the Jay, and the next moment one sees him darting across the riding or through the trees like a flash of lightning. Its cry is neither musical nor beautiful, indeed it is nothing but a harsh scream, but it is these somewhat discordant notes which by comparison make the trilling lay of the Lark or the strains of the Nightingale more attractive and beautiful; it is the plain livery of such birds as the Sparrows and Crows which makes the dazzling hues of the Kingfisher and Goldfinch so captivating; it is the variability of the hard-billed and soft-billed birds, the seed and insect eaters, the birds of prey,

Jay

and birds that are preyed upon—the variance in the mode of flight, the construction of the nest, the size, number, and colour of the eggs, which make the study of birds such an interesting and fascinating one. Thus the harsh scream of the Jay is very welcome, and, moreover, does it not serve its purpose well? When uttered, it acts as a signal to other wild creatures that danger is at hand, that they must have their eyes and ears alert, that the sentinel of the woods has sounded his warning.

The Jay is a practical joker. It is his habit to conceal himself in a mass of leaves near the spot where small birds are accustomed to gather, and, when they are enjoying themselves in their own fashion, will suddenly frighten them almost to death by screaming out like a Hawk. Of course, they scatter in every direction, and when they do so the mischievous rascal gives vent to a cackle that sounds very much like a laugh.

When kept in a domestic state, the Jay may be taught to articulate very plainly and cleverly. He is a most amusing pet, but is perhaps not so wary and artful as either the Jackdaw or the Magpie, but for all that he is no fool, and is up to all sorts of pranks. It may not generally be known that words in which the letter R appear are sooner learnt by the Jay, and, in fact, by most birds that can be taught to articulate. Mudie remarks that “this is accounted for by the unyielding nature of the mandible, which forces the air to come out between the upper part of the tongue and the palate on which that trills.”

The cruel practice of cutting a bird's tongue on the stupid pretence of enabling it to articulate more plainly should be condemned, and every humane person should help to put a stop to this foolish and cruel practice.

The Jay is a beautiful bird, but he is a thief. He pilfers young birds and the eggs of game, and for this reason I often come across a string of them on the keeper's gibbet or vermin pole. But let us not condemn the bird altogether without looking at the case for the defence, for young birds and eggs are not obtainable all the year round! He also partakes of fruit, mice, worms, snails and insects. The late Grant Allen has given a very exhaustive account of the food, and I quote the following from *Nature Sketches*:—“Jays live and breed in very dense

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copses ; they are essentially birds of the forest. They must therefore be far less numerous in Britain than formerly, just as the Rooks and Sparrows and House Martins must have increased enormously with the continuous increase of fields and houses. Like most of the Crow kind, they are fairly omnivorous, but their chief food is nuts, especially acorns. They are thus more frequent in oak-clad districts ; least so, I think, where pine and larch form the staple of the woodland. In the spring, when suitable vegetable food is naturally scarce, the Jay follows the example of the rest of its race, and feeds largely on insects. But these it finds for the most part in the copses and plantations, not in the open. At this season it devours large numbers of grubs and chrysalides, and so preserves the woods to a considerable extent from the plague of caterpillars. But these good deeds count for nothing with the gamekeepers as against the imputation of eating eggs, though the Jay must much more often attack the nest of Nuthatches and of Finches than of the sacred game birds. As the season progresses, and fruits and berries ripen, the Jay turns rather for sustenance to acorns, hips, haws, pine kernels and holly berries. He is also fond of the young shoots of branches, and of succulent seeds when he can get them. In the gardens of country houses, when the wood runs up close to the cultivated part, as is usual in this district, Jays are said to do much damage to the green peas, the beans, the apricots, and the currants ; and, indeed, early risers may see them so engaged at five o'clock in the morning. But they become wary after the day has well set in, and, for my own part, I incline to think that their good deeds as insect eaters in early spring far outweigh their small thefts of a pennyworth of garden produce. It is the habit of farmers and gardeners to reckon all the misdeeds of the beasts and birds, but to overlook their virtues, especially if the latter are unseen and unobtrusive. I allow that a hungry Jay will eat Partridge chicks if it can get them, but it will eat a thousand grubs to one young bird ; and Jays are really cheaper caterpillar-pickers to employ than boys—the boys eating more fruit and not caring for caterpillars, while the Jay likes insects best, and only takes to fruit as a dessert when sated with dinner.”

It is very rare that one meets with the Jay in open

Jay

country. I have seen it in a field skirting some dense wood, but on my approach it has dashed across the road and disappeared into the thickness of the surrounding coppice. This bird must know every inch of the woods he frequents—every branch almost, every thick fir tree where he can see but not be seen, where he can listen but not be heard. Sometimes I have disturbed a half-dozen or so, but on hearing or seeing me, they were up and off, as swift



NEST AND EGGS OF JAY.

as a rocket, in a zig-zag flight, so that to hit the bird would take a crack shot.

Towards the latter part of April and the beginning of May the nest is built. It is placed in a tree fork in some thick wood, but most of those I have seen have been on the tangled branches of a fir. It is also placed on the top of a thick bush. Roots and sticks are used, as well as smaller roots and grass. Five or six eggs are laid, and these are faint dusky green, closely and thickly freckled all over with light brown.

It has a greyish-white crest, with black streaks; from

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the base of the beak it has a black moustache; reddish-grey is the general colour of the plumage, darker above; dingy black primaries; velvet-black and white secondaries; rich chestnut inner tertiaries; the greater coverts, and what is known as the winglet, have black, white and bright blue bars; tail-coverts above and below white; bright blue iris; black beak; dark brown feet. Length, thirteen and a half inches.

LXXI.--KESTREL (*Tinnunculus alaudarius*).

WHATEVER may be said as to the partly black character of the daring Sparrow Hawk, no such allegation can be brought against this graceful and beneficial bird of prey. Why, then, is it persecuted? Simply because it is a Hawk. Prejudice and persecution are against *all* Birds of Prey, and so long as this lasts so much less does the chance of our rapacious birds increasing, or even keeping up their numbers, become. In districts where this lynx-eyed, feathered creature has entirely disappeared, a regular plague of mice and rats has almost always ensued, and all the cunning ingenuity of man has failed to cope with the rodents. For instance, in the course of a lecture delivered by Mr John Watson, in connection with the Kendal Ornithological Society, he stated that a few years ago, in the most extreme game preserving districts of Scotland, birds of prey had become, practically, exterminated. A plague of voles was the result. Over a tract of country sixty miles by twenty, the grazing was ruined, and one sheep farmer lost £1600 in the year. At last birds of prey were attracted from all parts, and the plague was soon stayed. Not only does this bird keep in check rats and mice, but it also feeds largely on beetles, snails, slugs, snakes, insects and worms, and has been known to rid the land, when it has young, of upwards of ten thousand vermin.

There is no doubt in the minds of those in a position to judge that the *Mouse* Falcon, Windhover, Keelie, Stand-gale, Staengall, Stannel Hawk, etc., is a wholly beneficent bird, and should be afforded every protection. There appears to be some hope of late that continuous protesting against bird persecution, especially the persecution of

Kestrel

those species which are indispensable boons to agriculture and horticulture—aye and even to human life—is having its effect in arresting the attention of gamekeepers, farmers and others, and to their credit be it said, many of them have found to their dismay that they have been slaying their best friends, and not, as they had supposed, their



KESTREL ($\frac{1}{4}$ Natural Size).

enemies. The fault of a great many bird persecutors has been, and is still, that they take a deal too much as granted, without even thinking it necessary to carefully inquire into the characters of their victims.

Of those who have spoken in favour of the Kestrel may be mentioned:—Lord Cathcart, Dr Hamilton Hawick, Canon Tristram, Lord Lilford, Macgillivray, and it is also set out as an indisputable boon in the House of Commons' "Report on the Plague of Field Voles, 1893." An incident

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related by Canon Tristram is so convincing that I have the pleasure to give it here. The Canon says:—"I met the keeper of Lord Boyne one day, who had just shot a Kestrel; I said, 'What a shame to shoot it, it does you no harm.' 'Oh, sir,' he said, 'it is varmin, they kill the Partridges.' I said, 'I will give you five shillings for every Partridge feather you find in his crop.' We went to the bird stuffer's, we opened the crop, and I counted in that cock Kestrel's crop 178 wireworms, and not a vestige of any bird's feather."

Standing on that beautiful eminence at the top of Aspley Heath in Bedfordshire, how often I have looked into the exquisite valley below and admired the peaceful scene. There nestling in the distance some little Bedfordshire village, with the church tower tapering towards the sky. Curls of blue smoke from the cottage chimneys disappearing lazily into space; the shrill cry of a North-Western engine, with the well-known white painted coaches, easily discernible in the distance; in front of us miles of arable land stretching right across to far Northampton Spire; on either side, and behind us, acres of fir and pine woods. A Lark carols above, Warblers all around; suddenly, over the tops of those tall firs and pines a mere speck appears. As it emerges into the more open country we get a better view of it. Bring it within range of the field-glass, watch it now. Almost motionless it seems—it is a lynx-eyed Kestrel searching from that tremendous height, for what? Before the question is answered it has dashed to the earth like a lightning flash, and is bearing away a mouse or a rat. Then, off into the thick woodland to its youngsters in the down. Be in no hurry—wait and watch. Lo, he appears again, quartering the ground for miles around, steadying himself one moment, then circling round in ever-graceful flight, and motionless again. He spots his victim, he does not hesitate, down he pounces with unerring aim, then off again.

What the Eagles do in the way of ornamenting our landscape in the north, the Kestrel, the Peregrine, the Sparrow Hawk and others do in the south. There is no more enthralling sight in Nature than to be a witness of the scenes I have described. I have often stood right underneath one of these birds. There directly above

Kingfisher

me was one of the balance keepers of Nature, quartering around in the space of perhaps a dozen yards, then almost still, the wings just quivering, then motionless, the well-defined and clean-cut tail showing off to perfection.

It is in April and May that this bird breeds, the nest being built on inland and marine cliffs, church towers, etc., but when built in woods and trees the nest of a Crow or Magpie is taken possession of.

Four pale reddish-brown eggs are laid, mottled with a darker tint.

The voice is a sharp, ringing, half-laughing cry, but when the young are in danger I have noticed a plaintive, almost pleading, sort of cry.

Dark leaden-grey is the colour of the upper plumage, neck and breast; light yellowish-red, with narrow longitudinal dark streaks on sides, wings and under tail-coverts; blue beak; yellow cere and feet; brown irides; black claws.

The female is light red above, as is also the tail, with transverse spots and bars of dark brown; underneath parts paler than her mate.

Length fifteen inches.

LXXII.—KINGFISHER (*Alcedo ispida*).

THERE seems little doubt that the Kingfisher is the most beautiful British breeding bird we possess. The yellow of the Yellow Bunting, the greenish-gold of the Siskin, the yellow and greens of the Wood Wren, the speckled Thrush and sooty Blackbird, all possess a charm; as also does the beautiful Chaffinch, and the golden-winged Goldfinch; the exquisite Green Woodpecker, and, beautiful blue wing feathers of the artful-darting Jay; the captivating beauty of the Kestrel, Peregrine, Hobby and Merlin; the beautiful flame-coloured tail-feathers of the Redstart, the lovely Terns, and innumerable Gulls; and so on we might go. All these and more besides are gorgeous and beautiful, but the Kingfisher outshines them all. I doubt if his plumage would show up so prominently if the shape and construction of the bird were not so attractive—short tail, thick stubby body, and tremendous beak. One may almost lay the bird in the palm of the hand, and what a

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collection of dazzling colours may then be seen ! The closer the inspection the more wonderful do the various greens, and azure blues, ochres and so forth appear. It is a feathered jewel.

It seems to me such a wanton thing to destroy Kingfishers, for besides being the most beautiful British bird left to us, they do very little harm, and no more pleasant sight can greet one when rambling by some placid stream than to see one of these feathered meteors dash by, or watch him in his fishing exploits. But these birds are in demand as wretched caricatures of bird life in the milliner's shop windows, and the very women who profess to possess tender hearts, and who preach humane principles, probably have on their heads a Tern or a Kingfisher. Not content with being the chief aggressors in the extermination of the Egret, or White Heron, our English women are still apparently quite content to be one of the means of encouraging the slaughter of Kingfishers.

Sir Herbert Maxwell truly says :—" Every hue that ever shone on feathered fowl can be imitated in Coventry ribbons. Would it not be better to provide employment for our own working class in legitimate home industry than to stimulate among South Sea islanders and longshore loafers the greed of exterminating some of the loveliest creatures on God's earth ? "

To my mind there are few feathered denizens of the tropics that can surpass this native bird in beauty of plumage and gorgeous colouring, and whilst many exotic birds possess their beautiful colours only for a short season each year as a nuptial adornment, the Kingfisher's charms are permanent all through the year, becoming only a little more vivid and lustrous during the summer months. Nothing can be more exquisite than the metallic sapphire-blue of the wings, and the emerald and purple flashes of colour which cast a continual halo of beauty around them. To see him silently skim along the surface of a river in the glow of the summer sunbeams is a sight not easily forgotten.

Contrary to the usual habit of birds, both sexes of the Kingfisher are equally beautiful. The reason the female bird in most species is less gaudily attired than her mate is believed to be because she is not so conspicuous when

Kingfisher

on or near the nest. As is, I believe, general the wide world over, brilliantly plumed birds do not possess very great musical powers—although there is one exception which occurs to me near at home, and that the beautiful and musical Golden Oriole—and thus it is that the note of this bird is a shrill pipe only, resembling that of the Sandpiper, but louder. It is uttered on the wing.

It is well known that the Kingfisher lives exclusively on fish and aquatic insects, but when these are not forthcoming tadpoles are partaken of.

It is a wondrous study to watch one of these birds at its fishing exploits. Let us try and picture the scene. Here is a gentle bend in the river; from here to the fall some hundreds of yards beyond is the haunt of a pair of these birds. The stream is bubbling in the glorious June sunlight, the willows hang in exquisite and graceful lines over the margin of the water. On the old stump on the other side of the stream a Kingfisher takes up its stand. We must be very quiet, and keep our eyes well open, or the deed will be done before we are aware of it. Watch through your field-glass at his every movement; scan those microscopic eyes, he sees every fish that passes, the shoals of silvery minnows, roach and dace, and speckled trout. Look, he is down, there is a splash, an upward movement and he is off into the bank yonder, and in less time than it takes to tell the tale, his fledglings are receiving their due portion of the spoils. The bird does not always watch for its prey from the favourite stump, but will flash down stream with the rapidity of thought, then hover almost motionless, and dart down upon its prey. The fish are held crossways in the beak, and the indigestible portions are cast up in the form of pellets in the same manner as Owls and other species. These pellets serve for a nest, they are trampled into a cup-like structure, the same being placed in some hole in a bank, but it has been found in the hole of a wall and in the holes of water-voles.

Six to eight beautiful glossy-white eggs are laid, almost as round as a globe. The breeding season extends from March to July, and it is believed the bird pairs for life.

Shortly, the plumage may be thus disposed of—azure-blue back; bluish-green head and wing-coverts, with azure-blue spots; a band of red under and behind the eye,

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which passes into white, and underneath this a band of azure-green; greenish-blue wings and tail; white throat; orange-red under parts. Seven and a half inches in length.

LXXIII.—KITE (*Milvus iclinus*).

THIS bird of prey is doomed to extermination in Britain unless stringent measures be immediately taken to protect the few remaining pairs left to us. Time once was when this bird was seen in London squares and elsewhere, but now, alas, I know of one district only (in Wales) where a horde of collectors come down upon the little colony every year so soon as the full "clutch" is laid. The other localities where it is still said to breed sparingly are in Scotland, and in some of the woods in the Western Midlands.

It seems hard to conceive that two or three hundred years ago it was no uncommon sight to see this bird hawking in the London streets, and it was regarded as of much value as a scavenger by clearing away dead and decaying matter, yet it is no stranger than true, and what we have to face is the best means of saving the few pairs left to us. Public opinion seems at last to be turning, let us hope it will have turned sufficiently quickly to save this noble ornament from total extinction. Once gone it will be a very difficult matter to again establish it in our avi-fauna.

From its magnificent and captivating flight this bird has been named the Glead or Glide Hawk, and other localisations accorded to it are, Crotched-tailed Puttock, Fork-tailed Glead, Greedy Glead, etc.

The deeply fork-tailed shape of the Kite enables the bird to be easily recognised, and it is a rare and commanding sight to stand on some eminence and watch the graceful and well-sustained flight. It does not possess the agility and dash of many of its relatives, being generally of a sluggish disposition, and in many respects resembling the now extinct Bittern.

It preys upon leverets, rabbits, young game, poultry, small mammalia, and offal. It certainly does damage in the directions which a glance at the creatures it preys upon indicates, but in many instances the sickly ones only are

Lapwing

taken, and rabbits and game are plentiful enough in all conscience! A gamekeeper was telling me recently that the rabbits on his estate were more plentiful than the rats, and did incalculable damage. Why not introduce a few Kites in the hope that in the trees on the estate they would nest? My contention with regard to its taking leverets is that it is doing some good, for a hare will do more harm in one night in a twenty-acre field than a pair of these majestic birds would do in a month. But hares afford rare sport, and thereby hangs a tale.

An incident related by the late Lord Lilford—that prince of ornithologists—is well worth mentioning. In his valuable work on the birds of Northamptonshire, he tells the story that he learned the news of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination from a scrap of a Spanish newspaper found in a nest of the Kite at Agapo, near Aranjuez, Spain, by his climber.

The Kite breeds in May, placing its nest of sticks and twigs, with a lining of wool, hair and other soft materials, in a tree. A favourite nesting site is the stump of an ivy-covered pollard tree. The three eggs are dirty white, with reddish-brown spots at the larger end.

A shrill shriek constitutes the vocal powers—compared to the words “whew,” and an occasional “keh-keh.”

Above, it is reddish-brown; the feathers have pale edges, those of the head and neck long, tapering to a point, greyish-white, with lengthwise streaks of brown; rust-coloured underneath, with longitudinal brown streaks; reddish-orange tail, barred faintly with brown; horn-coloured beak; yellow irides, cere and feet; black claws.

The female is of a deeper brown above, and the feathers are pale at the extremity; white head and neck.

It is twenty-five inches in length.

LXXIV.—LAPWING (*Vanellus vulgaris*).

I HAD a striking illustration recently of what I have before mentioned in these sketches, *i.e.*, the difference between seeing a bird strung up in a poulterer's shop and in its native element. I write in November, and, as I passed through London, scores of these birds caught my eye. So besmeared were they that I had to closely inspect them

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before I could recognise the beautiful snowy-white and green sheen Lapwing of the meadows and fallow lands. Curious to relate, on my journey from town through the undulating county of Middlesex, and then into well-wooded Hertfordshire, the screaming of the engine put up a flock of at least fifty Lapwings. Ah! what a peaceful scene this was to that noticed not an hour previously! How exquisite the snowy under breast, and, as it appears at a distance, black throat, face, upper breast and



LAPWING ($\frac{1}{8}$ Natural Size).

back. The plumage is shown off to perfection against the background of newly-ploughed rich red-brown soil. It was a glorious November day, the sun shining brightly, and Nature seemed to wish for a new lease of life. The little company rose *en masse*, then wheeled round, showing alternately jet black and pure silver. As I watched them toying and falling they reminded me of so many silver and black butterflies coquetting in the air, or so many

pure white and deep black leaves shimmering and hesitating before finally resting on the earth.

This bird is not only beautiful in form and colour, and in its ever-graceful aerial evolutions, but is one of the very best friends the farmer possesses. Yet in spite of this he is foolish enough to collect and send its eggs to market, and shoots the bird in the autumn and winter for a like purpose! Doubtless such a procedure swells his money bags somewhat, but what he gains in cash he loses in the long run, for the good which such birds as he has destroyed would have done on his land, would far out-balance his monetary gain. Sportsmen, too, make these

Lapwing

birds their targets, and the stupid practice cannot be too strongly condemned. The Earl of Bradford, writing to the *St James's Gazette*, supporting a letter of mine, said that he thoroughly agreed with my remarks as to the usefulness of the Green Plover, and that, fond of shooting as he was, he would never think of raising his gun at such a useful and beneficial bird.

In what manner then does this bird assist the agriculturist? Here is a list of the food on which the bird feeds for the farmer and others to study: Snails, slugs,



NEST AND EGGS OF LAPWING.

worms, small shell fish, insects, grubs, larvæ of the *tipula oleracea* or daddy-longlegs, caterpillars, weed seeds, wire-worms, aquatic insects, small fish, etc. It needs no words of mine to enlarge upon the destruction which many of the injurious insects, etc., contained in this formidable list carry out; the daddy-longlegs is a most obnoxious pest, devastating root and other crops wholesale. Writing to Miss Ormerod, one farmer reports that he lost £72 on a single field of oats in one year, through this grub infesting the same. Spraying chemicals, poisonous dressings, and so on do not appear to in any way lessen the numbers of these injurious land

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pests, in fact there is doubtless much truth in the assertion that such proceedings result in the driving away of the birds, grubs and insects thriving thereby. County Councils would do well to follow the example of Hertfordshire in fully protecting the Lapwing and its eggs.

The Nature lover would lose much of the charm which a country ramble affords if the Peewit did not appear wheeling, falling and circling in graceful lines over nearly every turnip field. How interesting to watch the bird as it endeavours to lure the intruder away from where its four eggs or young are secreted? Now high up, then lower and lower until its wings are almost stationary, and it alights on the top of some hillock and runs in and out of the furrows, between the leaves of the turnip, or the swede, or along the marshes. Then, at some distance, it again cleaves through the air, uttering its somewhat monotonous but sweet and plaintive "pee-wit," "pee-wit."

Among the local names given to this bird may be mentioned those of Plover, Crested Lapwing, French Pigeon, Lapwing Sandpiper, Peese-weep, Piwipe, Teachet, Tee-whaup, Teewit, etc. The name Lapwing was given to it because of the way in which it laps or flaps its wings when flying, and Peewit in consequence of its well-known cry, which name resembles its note.

During the autumn and winter months these birds congregate in flocks; thousands may sometimes be lighted upon, and to see a flock running along the newly turned-up stubbles in the autumn dexterously searching for food, then, at a given signal, rising into the air, is one of those sights in the country which appeals to the most indifferent observer.

It breeds in April and May, but sometimes as early as March and as late as June. The four eggs are placed in a mere hollow in the ground—ploughed lands, marshes, meadows, and the like. The nest, if such it can be called, is made up of dry grasses, bents, a few straws, and, sometimes, a sprinkling of moss. The eggs are olive-green, blotched or mottled with black or blackish-brown, pointed at one end.

Greenish-black on crown and crest; whitish on sides of neck; above, metallic green with purple reflections; black quills; white tail-feathers with a broad band of black;

Linnet

bluish-black face, throat and upper breast ; white belly, and axillaries ; fawn-coloured tail-coverts. Twelve inches in length.

LXXV.—LINNET (*Linota cannabina*).

ONLY those who have listened to a Linnet chorus can appreciate the beauty of it. Many a time I have suddenly been surrounded by a whole company of these sweet songsters, whose minstrelsy so delights and captivates. Perhaps he is the most favourite cage bird in Britain—at any rate with the poorer classes—and it is seldom one can pass through a village without seeing several Linnets in cages suspended over and by the side of the rustic doorway. I do not object to the poor man having his favourite Lintie, but what I do object to is the wretched little prisons in which most of them are incarcerated. I fail to see why dwellers in the country desire to cage birds at all, when, if unmolested, they will come to the garden and sing. But when birds *are* kept in captivity, give them as much room and air as possible.

It is a difficult matter to write a description of a bird's song, and very unsatisfactory too. It cannot convey the loveliness, and only those who know it can appreciate a written description. I cannot write more than that the song of this favourite Finch is remarkably sweet, brilliant and varied, consisting of several strains, and that it is beautifully flute-like in character.

In the past this bird was certainly much more plentiful than it is now, and, although there is no cause for alarm, there can be no doubt that the cultivation of waste lands, and the ravages of birdcatchers, result in a great thinning out in its ranks. I do not in my rambles now come across those large Linnet flocks that I did in bygone years, and rarely now observe a company of more than three score. In some districts it is no doubt much more numerous than others, but I know some localities from which it has been entirely driven away.

It possesses at least a score of provincial names, the more popular of which are : Brown Linnet, Grey Linnet (young), Red-breasted Linnet, Red Linnet, Rose Linnet, Song Linnet, Whin Linnet, Yellow Linnet, Greater Red-

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poll, Blood Linnet, Lintie, Lintwhite, and Red-headed Finch.

Besides being such a favourite song bird, both in captivity and when in enjoyment of liberty, this bird is a beneficial one too. I suppose almost every farmer or gardener on being asked what the Linnet feeds on would reply, "Young buds of fruit trees!" I feel more strongly than ever that every farmer, gardener and landowner



LINNET ($\frac{2}{3}$ Natural Size).

should be an ornithologist, or we will go a step further, and say a zoologist; then they would become intimately acquainted with the lives of wild creatures, and able to judge as to their economic value. The Linnet, however, eats a great many insects, as all the Finches do, more or less. It seems strange that these hard-billed seed eaters should also be partly insectivorous, but most of our British Finches feed their young almost exclusively on insects, and also take some for themselves. Besides these, the Linnet feeds on various weed seeds, and hemp and



NEST AND EGGS OF LINNET.

Magpie

linseed, whence its popular name. It certainly will take young buds off fruit trees during the winter, but the gardener in shooting at the birds knocks off more buds in the act, and does far more harm than is ever perpetrated by the birds themselves.

This is a somewhat shy and retiring bird; some writers, however, state it is of a social disposition, but my observations lead me to form a contrary opinion. It is by no means so perky and prominent as the Chaffinch, and owing to the somewhat plain livery is doubtless often overlooked.

The nesting season is from April onwards. The nest is generally placed in a furze bush, blackthorn or white-thorn, and consists of grass, with a lining of hair; a very compact and neat structure. The five eggs are white, faintly tinged with blue in ground colour, spotted with light reddish-brown and purplish-red, and somewhat resemble those of the Canary.

A Linnet kept in captivity gives a poor impression of what the true bird of the commons and wastes really is. This latter has a crimson forehead and centre crown; brownish-grey on rest of head, nape and neck sides; chestnut-brown mantle; blackish wing feathers, with white on outer edges, which are conspicuous; dark brown upper tail-coverts, margined with white; black tail-feathers, edged narrowly with white outermost and broadly on the inner webs; dull white chin and throat, with greyish-brown stripes; crimson breast; dull white belly, and fawn-coloured flanks. During the winter months the crimson feathers are lost in a greyish colour. The female bird is altogether less conspicuous in colouring, and possesses no crimson markings. Five inches and three-quarters in length.

LXXVI.—MAGPIE (*Pica rustica*).

I HARDLY know which I more admire about the Magpie, his beautiful glossy sheen and lustrous reflections of green and copper, or his cheeky, impudent and prying ways. It was no uncommon sight to see quite a number of these birds in the country years ago, but now it is not at all a common occurrence. It is nowadays a pleasant

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surprise to observe a half-dozen Magpies sporting and strutting in the fields and woods. I prefer to see them in open country, where one can follow their ways to much better advantage.

Of all the corvine race inhabiting the British Isles the Magpie is perhaps the most sagacious and cunning, and it is to these two traits that he owes his place in our avi-fauna, as the hand of the game preserver is dead set against him. Moreover, he is a very elegant creature, most inquisitive, excitable in temperament, restless, and loquacious. With the progress of persecution, the Magpie has become more wary and artful, and at times he is so quick in his movements that it is difficult to get a glimpse of him, or to identify the excitable creature. It is this excitement which often leads to his downfall and death, for on the approach of any wild animal of a preying nature he gives vent to his feelings, and laughs and shouts until the woods reverberate, and the keeper locates him. Bang! bang! and the excitable Pie falls bleeding to the ground, is picked up, a nail driven through his head, and he is another victim for the keeper's gibbet. There he hangs and rots, unless, perchance, some carnivorous animal finds the larder, which is much to his liking.

Well may this bird be called the Chatterpie, for he does chatter when he starts, and regular controversies seem to take place between small companies at times.

Its native call is a harsh "chatter," but it is not always harsh, as I have heard it uttered in a most subdued manner, as if secrecy were the watchword, and the password to be made known to none save its fellows.

When flying, the bird seems to halt at almost every tree which comes in his path, or, when lighted upon along some hedgerow, he hesitates before taking any prolonged flight. The long tail and jerky, flickering flight enables him to be identified fairly successfully when in open country, but when in a thick wood he so thoroughly knows every avenue and riding, every overhanging fir, that he is up amongst the thick foliage before one has time to discover him.

The Poyet, Hagister, Madge, Mag, Maggie, Maggot, Pianet, Piet or Pyet, all local names given to the Magpie, feeds on rats, moles, mice, waste corn, berries, slugs, cockchafers, crickets, weevils, beetles, carrion and fruit.

Magpie

It is also very fond of sucking eggs and killing young game, a crime for which it has often to pay very dearly, but what a number of injurious pests it partakes of! I know of an estate in Hertfordshire where these birds, as well as Jackdaws and Jays, are fairly numerous, yet game was never more plentiful on the estate than now!

How delightfully interesting to watch the Magpie dibbing after grubs and the like! I have often seen the performance. Up goes his prominent tail, down goes his head with all the force he can command, and in goes his fairly substantial bill. Watching through my long-range field-glass, I see he is gobbling up a grub of some sort, or a worm, snail or insect. I have seen companies of half a dozen working through whole fields in this manner, assiduously searching for and capturing many obnoxious land pests. How conspicuous the white webs of the quills are, and the white under plumage when flying in one direction, then a sudden plunge, and he becomes a black bird, then white again!

When in a domestic state this bird must be kept well under control, for all glittering and attractive objects are at once pounced upon and stowed away. It may be taught to repeat words very cleverly, but its long tail makes it look a very miserable and dirty object if imprisoned in a cage hardly large enough for it to turn round in.

It breeds in March, April and May, and places its substantial nest in lofty trees, though not always, for I have found it in larch and birch trees only twenty feet high, right at the top. Sometimes it is built in tall hedgerows and, it is said, in low bushes. The Magpie is a born architect, and the nest is a study. It is composed of thorny sticks, withered shrubs, clay, dry grasses and fibrous roots. It is a long nest, often repaired and used summer after summer, with a circular hole on the side, each twig being so deftly woven round the thin branches that no wind can shift it. I have been right at the top of a tree containing a Pie's nest when it has been blowing a regular hurricane, and have noticed that not a particle of the nest shifts out of position.

Velvet-black is the predominating colour of this interesting bird, this being present on the head, throat, neck and back; white on scapulars and under plumage;

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the tail is graduated, and, similar to the wings, black, with lustrous blue, green and copper reflections ; black beak and feet. Length, eighteen inches.

LXXVII.—MARTIN, HOUSE (*Chelidon urbica*).

It is especially fitting that the House Martin should be the first of its family on our list, for there is something so pleasing about him which endears him to me more than any other of his fellows. I do not mean to say that the little Sand Martin and the long-tailed Swallow have no attraction for me, but that I like the bird now receiving attention best of all. I hardly know why this is either, strange to say. Whether it is because he looks such a beautiful creature in his blue-black back, head and tail, and delicate snowy breast, especially when gathering mud from the roadside, or whether it is because he is such a useful bird, so conscious of protection, or because he warbles so sweetly when on or near the nest. Probably it is a combination of them all.

One of the local names given to this bird is certainly somewhat peculiar, namely, Martin-Swallow, but the following localisations are by no means untraceable :—Eave Swallow, House Swallow, Martinet, Martlet, Meadow Martin, White-rumped Swallow, and Window Martin and Swallow.

It generally arrives amongst us from the countries south of Abyssinia, where it spends the winter, a little later than the Swallow, about April 20th, but stray birds are almost invariably seen before this date. It gives one much pleasure to notice the appearance of the first House Martins. Until they arrive spring seems by no means complete ; it is true the delicate little Chiff Chaff and the Yellow Wagtail may already be with us, a remark which also applies to the Ring Ouzel, Wheatear and Sand Martin, but it remains for the House Martin and the fairy Swallow to call up our enthusiasm and whet our appetites for the bird life which has again appeared. How anxious everyone is to draw first blood ! Records, utterly ridiculous most of them, are sent to the papers by the middle of March, but it would be as well for the senders of these silly chroniclings to bear in mind that it is rare

House Martin

indeed that the Martin appears in our country before April.

The ever busy life which the Martin leads during the six months' sojourn on our shores is well known. As soon as it is light, until dusk, when the sun has first flashed across the dew-spattered meadows, and when the Bat has come out to commence its night prowls, the bird is out and about, capturing myriads of winged insects. What a graceful flight; is any other bird more beautiful to watch in its movements, its turns and twistings, its go-a-heads, its high-ups and low-downs? Those who know the Martin's flight will well understand this characterisation.

The Martin seems to fly somewhat heavier than the Swallow, and does not appear to turn and twist so sharply and abruptly as his near relative. Is not the evenly-forked tail prominently displayed as the bird flies directly overhead?

Of the good this bird does it is impossible to speak too highly, but although it is believed to be less numerous in Britain than formerly, there does not seem to me to be any cause for complaint as to its treatment here. This is due no doubt to the fact that it is not sought after as a cage bird, is of no use for eating, and anyone who dared to venture out of doors with a Martin in the hat would, I verily believe, be hissed and hustled out of sight.

The myriads of obnoxious insects they devour are inestimable, and what the air would be like were it not for the way in which these birds rid it of flies I would not care to predict. Not only do the parent birds devour a great many insects themselves, but the young seem to be fed by one or other of the birds nearly every moment.

Probably no bird warbles as does the Martin when on or near the nest. It is a delicate little song, low in compass, but deliciously sweet and bubbling. One often hears the welcome notes when walking along some crowded thoroughfare, and looking round sees nothing, but still the gentle song continues. Then, perchance, the little white bubbling throat may be sighted, just discernible in the cup-shaped nest. For its usefulness, its pretty little melody, its untiring devotion to its fledglings, and its preferment for human companionship, I love the bird.

It breeds from May until August, but I have seen young in the nest in September. The nest is generally placed

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under the eaves of houses, barns and other outbuildings, under bridges, on the face of rocks and cliffs. I even found a nest placed, or plastered, on the limb of a tree. The clay and mud nest is mixed with hair and fibres to strengthen it, with a lining of hay, straw and feathers. The shape is well known, rounded, with an aperture at the top.

Four or five eggs are laid ; these are white, and usually unspotted, but I have seen them very faintly spotted with red. They are more oval in shape than those of the Sand Martin.

Blue-black is the colour of the head, nape and the upper part of back ; lower parts of back and underneath pure white. Downy feathers cover the feet and toes. The length is five and a half inches.

LXXVIII.—MARTIN, SAND (*Cotile riparia*).

THE Sand Martin usually arrives a little earlier than either the last bird or the Swallow, and is the earliest of the three to depart. Early in April—probably during the first week—this, the smallest member of the family, arrives on our shores from its winter retreats, India and Africa.

I doubt very much if one person in twenty resident in the country knows this bird, but to the ornithologist it is at once identified by its mouse-coloured plumage in the place of the blue-black of the House Martin, and its smaller size. Moreover, the feet and toes are not covered with downy feathers as in the House Martin. The probable reason why this Martin is not well known is because, unlike the remaining members of this useful and interesting family, it does not seek human habitations and human companionship, preferring to haunt round sand pits and river banks rather than the noisy city streets.

It is a delightful scene to watch a colony of these birds. The largest colony I have ever seen in this country is at Aspley Guise, Bedfordshire, where, during the summer, there must be reared some thousands of fledglings. At this sand pit I have watched with much interest and amusement the antics of the Sand Martins, as each pair flit in and out of the tunnels which they have so cleverly hollowed out in the sand. The sand pit at the

Sand Martin

spot named is very difficult to scale, in fact it is practically an impossibility to get at the nests of these industrious little birds without a great risk of broken bones, and thus it is that the little colony pursues the even tenor of its way every summer. It is a busy scene indeed ; how each pair of birds know their particular hole is a mystery of the bird world, for there are thousands of them, and so close together in places that the wonder is the two pair of birds do not run into one another's workings. It is interesting to watch these birds hewing out their tunnels in the face of the sand. They do not dig, but perch on the side of the bank or cliff and pick out the earth with their beaks, a slow but sure method of excavation, the working hours being restricted to the morning.

When a distance of about three feet is reached, the end of the tunnel is expanded a trifle to the left and right, though not always. Here the nest is placed, consisting of straw, dry grass and feathers. The eggs are from four to six in number, and are white and pointed, longer than those of the House Martin. My impression is that many pairs of these birds have two tunnels, so that on the bird-nester thrusting the arm into one hole the bird has the chance of making its escape through the "emergency heading," if I may so call it.

Sometimes the extremity of the tunnel can just be reached by anyone possessing a fairly long arm, but often it is an impossibility to reach it.

During the breeding season—May, June and July—the ground is literally strewn with broken egg shells, forcibly reminding the observer that many a family is being reared and cared for in the holes above him. The Sand Martins do not wander far away from their favourite camping ground ; they may be seen skimming along the meadows hard by, or resorting to water if there be any in the vicinity, and I have seen them join company with the House Martins, the Swifts and the Swallows.

The nest is also placed in holes of river banks, cliff sides, gravel pits and clay pits.

As the birds fly about in companies a low monotonous note is uttered, and this is prolonged into a scream when an intruder appears on the scene. The male bird also possesses a little song or twitter, which is not at all unpleasant, but by no means strong.

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Their food is the usual Swallow diet of insects. Amongst the local names given to this bird may be mentioned those of Bank Martin, Bank Swallow, Land Swallow, Pit Martin, River Swallow and Shore Bird.

The bird is mouse-coloured uppermost, and on cheeks, with a broad bar on the breast; white on fore part of neck, belly and under tail-coverts; as already stated the legs and feet are not downy as in the House Martin, but naked, with the exception of a few small feathers towards the hind toe; the somewhat short tail is forked. Five inches in length.

LXXIX.—MERGANSER, RED-BREASTED (*Mergus serrator*).

THIS very handsome species does not breed with us excepting north of the Clyde, those resident in the south knowing it only as a winter visitor. At this latter season it is found in flocks, but as the spring advances our visitors disappear and doubtless pair off.

It is very shy and wary, and at the slightest alarm disappears under the water or flies away, sometimes before one has an opportunity of getting to close quarters.

Bar Drake, Lesser Dun Diver, Lesser Toothed Diver, Red-breasted Goon, Red-breasted Goosander, Sawbill and Sawyer are some of the local and old-fashioned names given to the bird.

It is a Duck, and as such resorts to large sheets of water and the sea coast.

The breeding season is towards the end of May, June and early in July, the nest being generally placed on some island or near the edge of a lake, often under the shelter of a rock, occasionally in a hollow in the ground, also among grass or scrubby bushes. It is composed of grass, leaves and heather twigs, with a lining of down. Six to nine eggs are laid, sometimes more; they are pale olive-grey, and glossy.

Small fish and molluscs constitute the food, and in shallow waters the bird may be observed with head and neck right under the surface, dexterously exploiting for marine molluscs secreted in the weeds.

The note is a harsh "karr-karr."

Merlin

The Merganser has red bill and irides; dark glossy-green head, crest and upper neck; a white collar exists below, which is separated on the nape by a thin black line running to the back, which is also black; black on inner scapulars, outer ones white; white speculum with black bars; rump, flanks and tail-coverts grey, and vermicular in character; pale chestnut lower neck with black streaks, a prominent tuft of white feathers with black edges on each side; white underneath; reddish-orange legs and feet. Two feet in length.

The female is reddish-brown on head and neck, and, as is usual with birds of this character, is less gaudy and smaller.

LXXX.—MERLIN (*Falco aesalon*).

THIS beautiful bird, the smallest Hawk we now have in Britain, is by no means so plentiful as formerly, and this result is to be attributed to the prejudice which exists against all Hawks. It is also called the Blue Hawk and Sparrow Hawk.

The prey of this bold and high-spirited Falcon consists exclusively of birds, such as Larks, Thrushes, Fieldfares, Blackbirds, Partridges and Snipe, and it has been seen in the vicinity of the seashore to take Dunlins. Although the bird does not appear to do any good in the destruction of rats, mice and other pests, it should not be condemned, for without these balance keepers of Nature, and these ornaments to our English landscape, we should be poorly off. Yet the too rapid increase of any species is to my mind most injurious, for the reason that should the food supply of that certain species fail them, they must of necessity fall back upon some other diet, and this "other" diet may be one which is not in the interests of agriculture or horticulture, or of economic value to man.

The resorts of this bird are moors and mountains, and from its habit of sitting on a bare stone or portion of rock, on the mountain moorlands, it has acquired the name of Stone Falcon.

It breeds in May and June, placing its loosely made nest upon the ground among the heath, and in mountains, rocks, precipices and the like. It is composed of a few

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twigs of heather, with a somewhat scanty lining of rootlets or dry grass. The four eggs are reddish-brown, mottled with a deeper tint.

The vocal powers are in the nature of a tremulous scream and a shrill chatter.

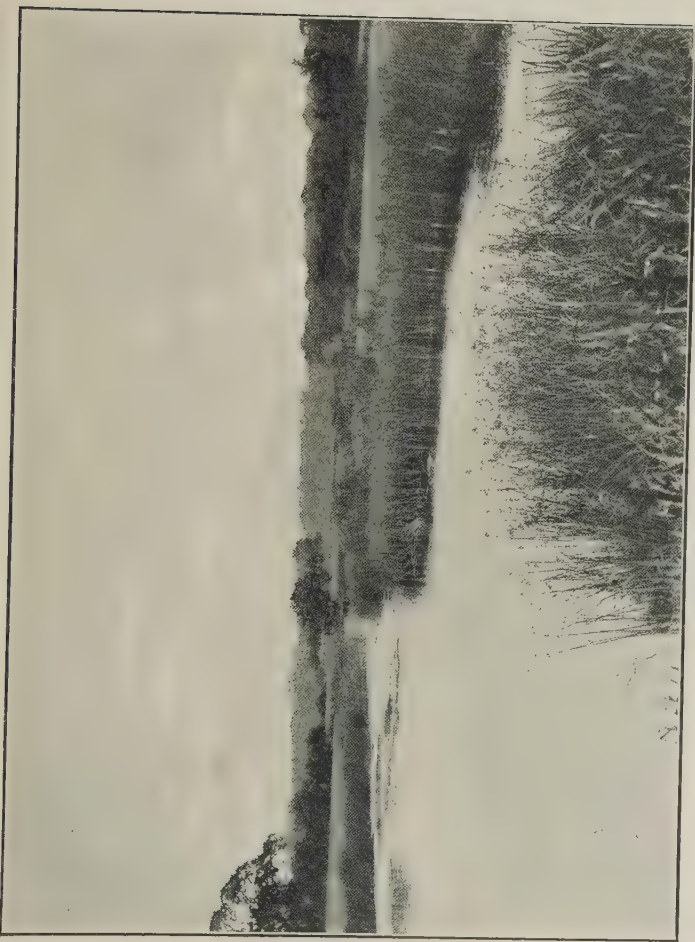
Greyish-blue above; reddish-yellow underneath spotted with dark brown; tail barred with black; bluish beak, darker towards the tip; yellow cere; dark brown iris; yellow feet; black claws. In the female the upper parts have a brownish tinge, underneath they are yellowish-white.

The length is from eleven to twelve inches.

LXXXI.—MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*).

GREAT BRITAIN still possesses more species of wild fowl than any other country, notwithstanding the fact that so much of our land is cultivated. Amongst them all I do not think there is one which is held in higher estimation by me than the sooty Moorhen. I have often when fishing been amused and interested by this bird, and how enjoyable it is to spend a few hours in the neighbourhood which it frequents. When I served my angling apprenticeship it was always impressed upon me that the best means of getting a good basket full of fish was to throw in your line and wait for events. There are many anglers who have not the patience to do this, they rather prefer rushing up and down in their excitement and enthusiasm, frightening as they go every fish and bird that comes within range and becoming a plague and a nuisance to the old hand who is content to sit on his camp stool the whole day long, with but two or three shifts. It is the "old hand"—pardon the vulgarism—from whom one can glean much information as to the birds to be met with in the situations which the angler frequents. I pride myself that I am becoming somewhat of an "old hand," and as such have had many opportunities of watching those birds which, unless one is prepared to study very carefully and closely, it is impossible to know much about.

Let me endeavour to picture the scene. It is towards the end of June; the lake where we are fishing is very



THE HAUNT OF THE MOORHEN.

Moorhen

beautifully fringed with various flowering rushes and other aquatic herbage. On the opposite side of the water there is an osier plantation ; sitting quietly and letting naught escape our attention, it is a delightful scene in which to participate. On the right of us is an old boat-house ; on one of the ledges a pair of Swallows have their cup-shaped nest, they are in and out the whole day long, untiring and unceasing in their useful work ; they flash across in front of us over the tops of the porcelain petals of the water lilies, and a little later a Kingfisher goes darting past like a bolt from the blue. Of all birds which one would expect to see in these surroundings, a Redbreast appears and nimbly hops from lily leaf to lily leaf, which mostly lie flat on the surface of the water. His antics, or his rosy red breast, I know not which, appear to have a special interest for a mimicking Sedge Warbler perched on the pliant osier stems. Up and down all day long a female Wild Duck proceeds with her five or six youngsters. The Drake is at this season away for a change of plumage. I have sometimes come across him, but how solitary and ill-content he seems : he is probably wondering how his partner is faring in family affairs, but Nature has so assigned it that he must forsake the Duck so soon as incubation commences. Then a rustle is heard in the rushes across the way, and with stately gait a sooty Moorhen makes its appearance. He is extremely cautious in his movements, and for some moments hesitates before finally making up his mind that the coast is clear. This done, he slips down the bank and into the water, swimming along with grace and facility, his head erect and ever moving. He suddenly observes us and dives to avoid detection. We next observe him in midstream, and by the aid of our indispensable field-glass are able to see him alight on the green sward on our side of the water. How quaint and graceful is his carriage ; his steps are measured, and are accompanied by a nodding head and jerking tail. The latter accomplishment enables us to discern the prominent snow-white plumage of the under-coverts.

The food consists of insects and vegetable matter, as well as snails, worms and slugs.

The flight is rapid but not long sustained, and is accompanied by a continuous flapping of the wings.

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The note always strikes me as a deep guttural one, somewhat in the nature of a "crr-o-ok-cr-o-ook," and it would be a perfect loss to ramble by the water without hearing the Moorhen's love-song.

Amongst the local names of this bird may be mentioned those of Common Gallinule, Cuddy, Gallinule, Great Gallinule, Marsh-hen, Moat-hen, Moor-coot, More-hen, Water-hen.

It nests from March to August, placing the structure among reeds or rushes, near or in the water, and, it is also stated, in low bushes, and on the horizontal branch of a tree overhanging the water. It is composed of dry rushes and reeds, and has a lining of finer sedges and dry grasses. The eggs number from seven to twelve. They are reddish-white, spotted or blotched with orange-brown. Opinions differ as to whether this bird does or does not cover the eggs with bits of vegetation when it leaves the nest. Charles Dixon, among others, says it does, whilst a gentleman who has observed the nest of these birds during the past twenty-six years writes to the *Zoologist* to the effect that he has never yet found the eggs covered.

"A Water-hen two days old," says Dr Skelton, in the *Table Talk of Shirley*, "is incomparably cleverer than a year old infant; before they are a month out of the shell they can wash and dress themselves; and at an age when the human baby is helpless, these water babies are keenly alive to the stratagems of fraudulent Magpies and felonious rats. . . . When I consider the really beautiful traits of character in these birds, I am absolutely filled with amazement when I find persons of no particular distinction talking with supercilious condescension of 'the lower animals.'"

The bill is yellow in front, and red at the base; red irides; dark olive-brown above; slaty-grey head, neck and under parts, streaked with white on the flanks; under tail-coverts white; greenish-yellow legs, red above the tarsal joint. Length, thirteen inches. Contrary to most birds, the female Moorhen is larger and brighter in plumage than her mate.

Nightingale

LXXXII.—NIGHTINGALE (*Daulias lusciniæ*).

WHAT shall we say of this feathered favourite—England's sweet-voiced Nightingale. Minstrelsy seems in the bird's every feather, it is living music. No bird in Britain can utter such deep mellow, liquid notes as this renowned songster. It has its imitators, one can detect Nightingale-like notes in the songs of other birds, but that "jug-jug" can only be uttered by Philomel himself. It is one of the strange facts in Nature that such a wondrous musician should be such a plain coloured bird—that is at a distance, for when closely examined the plumage is very beautiful. Yet it is the rule, rather than the exception, that gorgeously plumed birds are mere "screechers," whilst sober-coloured ones almost invariably possess voices of exceptional merit. In this respect one has only to mention the Warblers to prove the truth of the statement, as nearly all the members of this family which inhabit Britain are "mere brown birds," yet, as their name implies, "Warblers."

Poets and writers have from time immemorial almost, been lavish in their praise of this bird, and certainly not without reason, but to my mind there is a greater praise due to the trilling Skylark—which is with us all through the year—than to the Nightingale, which is with us only during the summer and whose song gives place to a hoarse kind of croak when the nesting season has commenced. Not that I do not like the Nightingale's deep resonant notes—I love them and they captivate me—but it is a slight on the Skylark to praise Philomel too highly. Probably the reason of the over-sung praises about the Nightingale—or rather the reason why its song is so captivating—is because it is listened to for the most part during the stillness of the night, when most of its fellows are at rest. Then, with naught to be heard save the drowsy tinklings from some distant fold, or the droning flight of some moth, as suddenly the bird breaks out into song, there comes over one such a peculiar fascination that one invariably exclaims, "Hark! did you hear that? the Nightingale!" Indeed, Shakespeare has written that :—

"The Nightingale, if she should sing by day
When every goose is cackling, would be thought
No better a musician than the Wren."

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The Bard of Avon I think falls into at least three errors in these lines, for firstly, the "she" Nightingale does not "sing"; secondly, the bird *does* sing by day when every goose is cackling; and thirdly, the Wren is one of the best musicians we have in the land. I have heard the Skylark sing at twelve o'clock at night during the autumn, and I would just as soon listen to it as to the strains of the Nightingale. True there are not those deep, long-drawn-out notes which we always associate with the "little brown bird," but there is beautiful music in the Skylark's song—there is quality and quantity, and if the Lark—"that blithe spirit" which captivated Shelley, Eric Mackay, Wordsworth and James Hogg—were the last remnant of British bird life I could make myself happy listening to its delicious melodies. Readers may think I am writing disparagingly of the Nightingale's undisputed musical beauty, but it is not so. I only wish to put on record my humble opinion that far too much fuss has been made about it, and far too little about one of the sweetest-voiced musicians in the whole choir of Nature.

I have been rambling through some thick spinny in May perchance, and suddenly, hearing a rustling a few feet away, I have peered through the thick undergrowth. There within striking distance almost, was Philomel. Standing quite still—those dark lustrous eyes of his ever on the watch—we may have the good luck to see that bird which delights so many, preening himself, or tackling some insect. As we stand watching, the thought strikes us that it is wonderful that, from such a small dainty little throat can proceed such deep liquid notes. Probably a great many people who have heard the Nightingale's song would not know the bird if they saw it. In fact I have known people who have been surprised to see so small and plain a bird, and others who, on first hearing its melodies, have been disappointed.

I know of no musical instrument on which can be produced notes in any way approaching the well-known deep, mellow, long-drawn-out ones of the Nightingale. Certainly there is not a note on the finest-toned piano which can in any way convey an idea of its beauty and loveliness, and as for writing a description it is mere fallacy to attempt such an insurmountable task. It has in these exquisite utterances a song of its own, it has no rivals in so far as

Nightingale

its own particular stanzas are concerned, and this being so there is not likely to be any depreciation in the eagerness with which during middle April, country dwellers listen for the well-known signs of his presence once more amongst us. The song of the Nightingale is one which seems to me to be sung *at* the listener, it appeals to one because it is so beautiful without being brilliant, so mellow, so flute-like, captivating, fascinating and "fetching." Izaak Walton has given us a good description when he says: "The Nightingale . . . breathes sweet, loud music out of her little instrumental throat. . . . He that should hear . . . the clear airs, the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and redoubling of her voice, might well be lifted above the earth." Unfortunately Walton writes "her" for "his."

From the *Progress of Creation*, by Mary Roberts, I cull the following beautiful extract with regard to the song of this bird:—"There he concealed himself where all, beside the grey old ruin, seemed bursting into life and beauty, and there he seemed to warble an unknown drama, intermingled occasionally with the most extravagant bursts of joy, and plaintive notes of recollection. Strange, that such a powerful voice can reside in so small a bird, such perseverance in so minute a creature. At one moment he drew out his note with a long breath, now diverging into a different cadence; now interrupted by an unexpected transition. Sometimes he seemed to murmur within himself, and now again his note was full, deep and clear."

A writer in the *Globe*, discussing the topic of "Nightingale Phantasies," says:—"Some years ago a patient investigator compiled a list of nearly two hundred different epithets bestowed by the poets upon his song. They include such contrasts as merry and melancholy, heavenly and piteous, plaintive and rapturous—in short, as many antitheses as are to be found in human nature's varying moods. We know how often a jest's prosperity lies in the ear of the listener; and much the same thing may be said of the song of the Nightingale."

It is generally a shy and retiring bird, and it is not often that one can observe it in the open. It loves to frequent dark places—hence its dark olive-coloured eggs and sombre plumage, perhaps—and to hop about in the interminable undergrowth. It is curious that its range in

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Britain should be so limited. It is unknown in Ireland, and practically unknown in Wales and Scotland, though a few pairs have of late years been observed in North Wales, whilst in Devon and Cornwall it is uncommon. In the Midland and Southern Counties it seems to revel, in Hertfordshire especially it is plentiful, and this may be due to the fact that the woods and coppices, with which Hertfordshire abounds, afford it excellent breeding grounds.

Philomel is the only other name by which I know this bird, and it arrives on our shores from its winter quarters, *i.e.*, Africa, the second week in April, the males preceding the females by about ten days.

The nesting season is May and June, and the structure is placed on or near the ground in some thick tangled bush or thicket. Dead leaves (especially those of the oak), dry grass and similar materials are used, with a lining of roots, vegetable down, etc.

Four or five eggs are laid, which are olive-brown, or dull greenish-blue.

Being one of the Warblers, its food has already been included in the list given in the sketch of the Blackcap, but it may be as well to briefly state that it consists of various grubs and insects.

Above, the plumage is chestnut-brown; rufous tail; greyish-white underneath; pale ash on flanks.

Six inches and a quarter in length.

LXXXIII.—NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus europæus*).

THE Nightjar loves to frequent an open tract of country bordering a wood. It delights in a situation where there are many low bushes, and a great quantity of bracken and heather, and is particularly fond of a sandy soil. It arrives amongst us from the winter quarters in India and Africa about the first week in May, and I am always eager to get the first sight, and hear the first strains of its curious jarring warble. I know of no less than a score or more of local names, the more prominent being those of Churn Owl, Fern Owl, Evejar, Goatsucker, and Night Hawk.

The note of this bird is a peculiarity all its own,



NIGHTJAR ($\frac{2}{3}$ Natural Size).

Nightjar

and those who have never heard it will gain some idea of what it is like by vibrating the tongue against the roof of the mouth. But that, after all, is a very poor conception of the vocal powers of this interesting prowler of the night, for he must be heard in his native vale to be appreciated and admired. Take away things from their natural surroundings and they frequently lose all their



"NEST" AND EGGS OF NIGHTJAR.

lustre and beauty. Pluck the anemone and it soon droops in the hot hand ; fish out some of those lovely weeds—no, not weeds, river flowers—which, as looked at in the looking glass of Nature, are so beautiful, and they become dull and uncomely ; the heath bells, the violets, the primroses, the cowslips, the milk-white bloom of the hawthorn, and so on ; do these present that charm when plucked and vased for the table as when seen in their own nature-adorned spot ? The Lark may sing beautifully in the cage, but he sings more beautiful still as you watch him towering

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towards the azure sky; the Gulls are interesting to watch in the parks, but how much more charming to see the snow-clad cliffs and rugged precipices, where thousands are portrayed in white, silver and black armour.

I have not heard the Nightjar sing after the end of June, but by that time the two eggs are well on the way to incubation, and it takes both birds all their time to keep the two eggs, which are laid on the bare ground, warm, and satisfy their own appetites. The eggs are usually laid near and almost under a tuft of grass or bracken, or some low bush, but I have also found them right in the open. The colour of the egg is white, marbled and mottled with grey streaks, sometimes brownish-black, and faint lilac-grey. They are very beautiful and quite distinct from those of any other British bird.

It is towards evening when this bird, which Gilbert White has given us such a graphic account of, commences its aerial evolutions for the most part, and it is my experience that during the day it squats and sleeps, but I have met with it on a few occasions from early morn to dewy eve. I like to watch it in the evening best, just when it is getting dusk, when all nature seems hushed,

“ Save where the beetle wheels its droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds.”

You see, the beetles and the larger insects “wheeling their droning flight” at this time, supplies an adequate reason why the Nightjar should also be astir, for he feeds on insects of all descriptions, and has a partiality for the cockchafer and the goat moth. He catches his prey in a similar manner to the Swallow tribe, that is to say, in his wheelings, turnings and twistings, in fact the bird may be looked upon as a kind of gigantic and sombre Swallow, whose movements are made in the dusk of night instead of in the glare of day. I have often been watching a certain bird, just able to follow him in his peculiar aerial evolutions, when another one has taken up its station on the bough above me and started pouring out its warble. Watching him carefully we are enabled to see that he does not often sit crosswise on the branch, as birds in general do, but lengthwise, and that with the head very low; in fact a friend remarked to

Nuthatch

me once when we were watching these birds that the one on the branch just above us was squatting, and he was not far wrong.

It is ash-grey, barred and spotted with brown, black and chestnut; a large white patch on the inner web of the first three primaries, and tips of white on each side of the two outer tail-feathers. Length, ten and a quarter inches.

LXXXIV.—NUTHATCH (*Sitta caesia*).

THERE is something about the Nuthatch which strikes me as being very peculiar, and which is not present in any other British bird. He has a world of his own, so to speak, and does not seem to have any inclination for mixing with his fellows, though I believe that during the winter months it will associate with the Titniece and others of the feathered race, and roams about in company with them in search of food. But, personally I have found the Nutjobber, Mudstopper, Mud-dabber, Woodcracker, or Jar Bird, some local names given to the bird, a most solitary being. He is always busy, and I have never yet seen him idle. He is either pecking away at a hole for a nesting site, or coming down head foremost searching for insects and their larvæ, tapping as he goes to wake up the lurking creatures he knows full well, wise bird that he is, are secreted in the crevices of the bark. I have said he comes down head foremost, but this is not his only position; he can climb, cling head downwards, clamber, run and scamper, reminding one more of a squirrel than a bird. Certainly the Nuthatch is to me one of the most interesting members which go to make up the avi-fauna of our country, and my country walks, that is when they are taken in the neighbourhood of woodland, would lose much of their charm if this delightful bird did not put in an appearance. It is my opinion that these birds pair for life.

I have mentioned that this bird feeds on insects, but this by no means constitutes his bill of fare, for, as the name implies, it feeds on nuts; beech mast, acorns and berries are also partaken of.

It extracts the kernels from hazel nuts in a very ingenious

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manner, namely, it places the nuts in the crevices of the bark of an oak tree and hammers away with its strong bill until the shell is broken.

The Nuthatch is no musician, but he is a good mimic, and I have often heard those long, oft-repeated, clear-ringing notes: "twit-twit twit"; "whit-whit-whit"; or "gon, dek, dek"; or "twit-twit"; or "twit-wit-wit."



NUTHATCH ($\frac{1}{2}$ Natural Size.)

When in flight the bird also utters a soft and low note, somewhat after the manner of "si-si-si."

The breeding season extends from April to July, and the situations chosen as a nesting site have already been alluded to in passing, but besides a hole in a tree it will sometimes build in a hole or crevice in a wall. The nest consists of a bed of dry leaves, flakes of bark, etc., and the hole, curious to relate, is plastered up with clay, leaving only sufficient room for the ingress and egress of the bird.

Osprey

Six or seven eggs are laid, which are white, spotted or blotched with red-brown. They are hardly distinguishable from those of the Great Titmouse.

The plumage is bluish-grey above; eye, streaked black; white cheeks and throat; buff breast and belly; chestnut-red flank and lower tail-coverts; black on outer tail-feathers, with a little white near the extremity, tipped with grey, the two central ones grey; bluish-black beak, white at the base of the lower mandible; light brown feet. Five inches and a half in length.

LXXXV.—OSPREY (*Pandion haliaëtus*)

THIS fine British bird must not be confounded with the species from which "ospreys" are obtained. "Osprey" is apparently a mere corruption of "spray," but "aigrette" is simply the French for our own "egret," and the Egret is a snowy-white Heron, of which there are several species found in different countries.

As to the present bird, it is without doubt a rare species in Britain, and it seems that at no distant date, unless its present breeding haunts be rigidly protected, it will be lost to us as a British breeding bird. Private enterprise is needed. Laws are of little, if any, value for the reason that they are rarely carried into effect, and I am entirely in agreement with my friend Mr Richard Kearton in this respect.

In the House of Commons, during 1899, Mr Alexander Cross drew attention to the fact that an Osprey, *a bird of great rarity, and said to have only two breeding places in Scotland*, was shot by order of Mr Fellowes Gordon, of Knockespoke, in contravention of the Wild Birds Act. Upon a prosecution being instituted before the Aberdeen Sheriff's Court, the gamekeeper, who was found guilty, was fined £1, whilst the dead bird was stated to be worth £20 or £25 as a specimen. He asked whether the Government could see its way to increase the penalty for the destruction of these rare birds. The Lord Advocate said the whole occurrence was a very regrettable one on the part of people who might have been expected to know better. He was not aware whether the

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value of the bird was so high as stated by the hon. member, but if acts of that class were persisted in, the Secretary for Scotland thought there would be a strong case for proposing legislation with the object of increasing the penalty.

I doubt very much if an Osprey, obtained in our country, is worth the amount mentioned by Mr Alexander Cross, but it is certainly owing to the greed of the collector that the present rareness of the bird is due. Its eggs are sold at about five shillings each—even at this figure not guaranteed British-taken—so that it will be seen that there is just cause for alarm.

It still lingers on as a British breeding bird, but I judiciously omit to state its haunts, save remarking that it resorts to the coast for the most part, yet builds its nest in trees.

The structure consists of a mass of sticks, seaweed, grass, turf, etc., and being repaired year after year it assumes large proportions, so much so that a whole cartload of various paraphernalia has been taken from its nesting site at one time.

Three eggs are usually laid, and these are yellowish-white, irregularly spotted with yellowish-brown.

The Osprey has been given the following local names:—Fishing Hawk, Bald Buzzard, Eagle Fisher, Fishing Eagle, Mullet-Hawk, and Sea Eagle (young).

None of these local names are, for a wonder, out of place, for the bird has much of the appearance of an Eagle, but its diet is made up exclusively of fish, such as mullets, and the like.

It captures its prey with much address, and proceeds deep enough into the sea as to entirely disappear for an instant, until it emerges with its prize. It is a bird possessing a somewhat majestic flight, at least so it strikes me, and the alarm-note is a harsh scream. The call-note is likened to "K, K, K," uttered repeatedly.

On the head the feathers are white, dark towards the centre; neck the same, with a blackish-brown streak, extending in a downward direction; deep brown upper plumage; white underneath, with a tinge of yellow, and arrow-like spots on the breast; dusky bars on tail-feathers; dark grey cere and beak; yellow iris.

The length of the bird is two feet.

Ring Ouzel

LXXXVI.—OUZEL, RING (*Turdus torquatus*).

THE Ring Ouzel, or Michaelmas Blackbird, Moor Blackbird, Mountain Blackbird, Ring Thrush, Rock Ouzel, Stirlin, Tor Ouzel and White-throated Blackbird, has always been a great favourite of mine. The local name of White-throated Blackbird admirably suits this bird, for it is very much like a Blackbird with a ringlet of white round the throat. It is a summer visitor, arriving towards the end of March or the beginning of April, wintering in Northern and Central Africa and Asia.

These birds are not known to those resident in the south other than as spring and autumn visitors on migration, for during the summer they are mostly found in Derbyshire, Devonshire, on the Yorkshire moors and similar localities, and for the most part they love to frequent dingles and such like surroundings. I know of a certain wild spot in Herefordshire where they breed in fairly good numbers. There is water in plenty and some pretty high hills, and the surroundings are of the most desolate and isolated character. Hardly any sound is heard except the rushing of many trickling streamlets, pouring down the mountain sides, and then burying themselves in the ravines below. It is here that the bird now receiving attention loves to pass its summer time, and perhaps it is because of the quietness and seclusion to which it is accustomed that it is such a timid and shy bird.

I have seen them in the south in flocks during the early autumn, and been able to get fairly close to them, but in their nesting haunts it is always a difficult matter to get within close range, and often one is able to see them only by the aid of field-glasses. Alone in these mountain fastnesses one may perchance hear the welcome carol of a brave little Wren, or observe a few Wheatears and Rock Doves, but with these exceptions bird life is very rare indeed, and what species do inhabit such surroundings live in their own little world in apparent happiness and contentment, safe from the nest-robber and gunner. Other forms of wild life found in these districts are few and far between, though one may notice the wood sorrel and the butterwort, perhaps a solitary butterfly now and

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then, a few common heath moths, the heather and the bilberry. These latter, I believe, the Ring Ouzels dearly love, although I have not seen it mentioned in any other work. There are many birds I know who consider these berries a great delicacy, and as they are fairly plentiful in these wild and desolate places, the Ouzels doubtless do not fare at all badly. The Ouzel partakes of insects and their larvæ, snails and slugs, and where it is found in the neighbourhood of farms and agricultural holdings, does inestimable good in ridding the land of many obnoxious pests.

The breeding season extends from towards the end of April until June, and the nest is generally placed on some steep bank, under a covert of grass or heath, or on some shelf amidst mosses, which, the outside being composed of the same material, entirely conceal it from view. Sometimes it is placed in the fissure of a rock, on the wildest and most rocky parts of glens and ravines, and when built on the moors it is to be found close to the ground in some clump of heather.

The nest is similar to that of the Blackbird both in form and texture.

Four or five eggs are laid, and these are very much like those of the last named, but for the most part they are more boldly and richly marked.

The note of the male bird consists of a few clear notes—not unlike that of the Mistle Thrush—which bird the Ring Ouzel resembles in disposition during the breeding season, driving away other species, even flying round dogs and other animals, striking at them and uttering loud cries.

The plumage generally is black, with white edges to the feathers, a large crescent-shaped spot of white on the throat. The plumage of the female is of a greyer character, and the white mark is not so pure a white, and is narrower than in the male bird. Length, eleven inches.

LXXXVII.—OWL, BARN (*Strix flammea*).

OF the whole 177 birds with which we deal the present is one of the most useful, and yet one of the most persecuted. It seems strange that such a useful and

Barn Owl

interesting feathered creature should be so done to death, but I think it may be attributed rather to ignorance as to the bird's true character. The four Owls which still breed in our country are all useful, but the Barn Owl is perhaps the most beneficial and most beautiful. What a lovely creature he is in his soft, silky-white and speckled plumage, and how noiselessly he flits about in quest of his prey! Of all the various twelve thousand (about) known species of birds, there is to my mind none more worthy of a close study than the Owls.

Their curious voices attract our attention, their remarkable oddity interests and amuses us, and their extraordinary night eyes is a study in natural history which has engrossed the attention of many master minds. They are weird, curious, mysterious, useful, interesting creatures, mistaken by gamekeepers and farmers as to the life they live, and admired by the student of ornithology for their interest and usefulness.

I must perforce refer here to the use of the barbarous pole trap, and the many Owls which suffer the penalty of death by means of the cruel teeth of this murderous instrument of torture. Set apparently for the purpose of catching Hawks, Jays, etc., other eminently useful birds, such as Owls, Cuckoos, Nightjars, etc., are more often found pinned in the cruel clutches, but very rarely the Sparrow Hawk, for whom the traps are set.

Is it surprising then that the Owls are decreasing in our land? It is a rare sight now in some districts to hear or see an Owl; in some neighbourhoods they have entirely



BARN OWLS ($\frac{1}{2}$ Natural Size).

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disappeared, where previously they had been fairly common.

That remarkable naturalist Charles Waterton even threatened to strangle his keeper if he molested a pair of Barn Owls which he had induced to build on his premises, and it is not to be wondered at. A writer in the *Woman's Agricultural Times* says that "knowledge filters slowly into the minds not only of keepers, but of educated and humane people. Still, the percentage of those who study Nature and observe accurately is on the increase, and no farmer or keeper has any excuse now for looking upon the Owl as anything but his best friend. An Owl has been watched bringing food to its young, and the rate was found to be a mouse every quarter of an hour; and where the castings of a pair of these interesting birds have been examined the traces have been discovered of no less than 1800 mice, besides a few rats and bats and small birds."

Sir Herbert Maxwell, in his *Fowls of the Air*, writes:—"The services rendered to farmers, gardeners, millers, and indeed to all rural householders, by a pair of Owls, is quite beyond calculation. And how do we reward them? By shooting down this beautiful nocturnal police, savagely tearing out wing and tail-coverts, fixing them on our feast-day hats for a few weeks, and then casting them on the cinder heap. To man, we are told, was committed the privilege of devising names for all animated nature. He has, with questionable modesty, reserved for his own species the title of *Homo sapiens*—Man the Wise. Sometimes there is forced upon one the reflection that one of two courses is necessary: either a new classification and re-naming of species, or the abandonment of certain practices which make the old nomenclature inappropriate. It would be more creditable to our intelligence if, assuming it to be necessary for ladies to display the spoils of animated nature in their attire, they should adopt the fashion of wearing the carcasses of rats, mice, and other furred marauders on their heads."

Mr Boyd Alexander writes:—"When Nature created rats and mice and endowed them with such a remarkable power of rapid reproduction it was necessary to produce another form of life which would keep their numbers in check, and so Owls were created—birds possessing keen vision in the dark, and sharp formidable talons. No

Barn Owl

greater mistake has been made than to suppose that these birds are inimical to the interests of man. Rat and mice plagues are not uncommon, and their occurrences have invariably been found to be due in a great measure to the banishment of Owls from the locality afflicted. This is not a surprising fact when it is considered what a large amount of vermin a single pair of Owls will consume in one night, especially when they have young to feed. The late Lord Lilford, in his *Birds of Northamptonshire*, says : —“ I have seen a young half-grown Barn Owl take down nine full-grown mice one after another till the tail of the ninth stuck out of his mouth, and in three hours' time it was crying out for more.” It is a difficult matter to teach the average gamekeeper, who is singularly ignorant of natural history, that Owls are his friends. He lives on tradition ; they were looked upon as vermin and birds of ill-repute by his forefathers and so they will remain to him.”

The food of the Barn Owl then, consists of rats, mice, occasionally beetles, moles, shrews and fish.

The Owl and all the Hawk tribe cast up the indigestible parts of their prey, such as bones, feathers, hair, claws, etc., in the form of pellets, and in the long tenanted haunt of an Owl these greatly accumulate.

The Owl's wise look is the result of a physiological oddity, his eyes being fixed immovably in their sockets ; so whenever he passes his eyes from one object to another he must move his head.

Many are the local names by which this Owl is known in various parts of the country, amongst them being those of White Owl, Church Owl, Hissing Owl, Screech Owl, Howlet and Yellow Owl.

It breeds from May on to July, sometimes later, placing its rude nest of decayed wood or other similar materials found in holes of trees, and the pellets which the birds disgorge and cast-off feathers, among ivy-clad ruins, antique church towers, hollows of old trees, barn lofts, hence the name Barn Owl, and similar places of seclusion.

The three or four white eggs are 1·6 by 1·25 inches. Two eggs are laid at a time, that is two, which are hatched, and then a second clutch.

Of the voice of the Owl, who has not heard the weird note, and how many superstitions has it given rise to ?

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The present species hoots, snores and hisses, and Selby says it occasionally utters loud screams during its flight. Alarm or anger—a snapping of the bill.

It has a yellowish-white beak; above, it is tawny-yellow variegated with brown, grey and white; white on face and lower parts, with the margin feathers tipped with brown.

Fourteen inches in length.

LXXXVIII.—OWL, LONG-EARED (*Asio otus*).

It seems a great pity that the Little Owl cannot be included in our list of British breeding birds. A few pairs have bred in our country, and probably still do so, but they are very few and far between and have been “introduced.” To my knowledge the Hon. Walter Rothschild let a good many pairs out at Tring Park, but that crazy fool—the pot-shot gunner—has done his work well, and very few, if any, were alive long enough to breed and settle down. We are thus brought to the Long-eared, or Horn, or Long-horned Owl.

Having given a somewhat lengthy account of the first Owl on our list—the Barn Owl—much cannot be added to any of the three remaining species that has not already been referred to. They all resemble each other more or less, and when the general life and habits of the first member has been written, it covers almost the whole ground. The Long-eared Owl, however, differs greatly as to its nesting site, for it often appropriates the deserted nest of a Crow or Magpie, and sometimes even that of a squirrel. It is stated that it never builds a nest of its own, and my experience bears out this statement. It is an early breeder, the four or five white eggs, rough in texture, not glossy like a Pigeon’s, and measuring 1·65 by 1·3 inches, being laid in March or April.

I have often noticed that on many of the eggs of the Owl family a few raised spots are to be found at one end, but I have searched in vain in the writings of other naturalists for mention of this fact.

The food of the present bird is made up of voles, Larks, field mice, insects and young birds, whilst the voice somewhat resembles that of the Barn Owl, but is to be dis-

Short-eared Owl

tinguished from others of its kind by a mewling cry. It also possesses a short, barking cry.

The bird has a blackish beak ; orange-yellow eyes ; buff on upper parts, with mottlings of grey and brown, and dark brown streaks ; facial disk buff, greyish-black on margin and outer rim, warm buff and grey underneath, streaked with blackish and small transverse bars.

Fifteen inches in length.

LXXXIX.—OWL, SHORT-EARED (*Asio brachyotus*).

THE Short-eared Owl differs from its three British relatives by being a day flier as well as at night.

One of the local names given to this bird is that of Woodcock Owl, but whether it is thus named because it appears in the autumn at about the same time as the wary old Woodcock, or because the two birds resemble each other in their flight, I do not know, but I should rather think the former is the more likely explanation.

A most excellent description has been given of this Owl by my friend "Rusticus" in *To-day*, and it is so valuable an account of the bird's life and habits that I reproduce it hereunder. "Rusticus" says :—"Unlike other Owls, the migrating Short-eared Owl seems to enjoy the daylight, and may often be put up out of the turnips like a Partridge. At other times it may be seen, hawking in broad daylight round a stack for rats and mice ; and it is a curious fact that small birds—on which it not infrequently makes a dinner—recognise the Short-eared Owl as something quite different from the Barn Owl or Brown Owl. When either of the latter venture into the daylight, they are at once mobbed by a crowd of Sparrows, Chaffinches and Wag-tails, who jeer the wretched purblind creatures from cover to cover throughout the live-long day. Towards the Short-eared Owl their behaviour is different indeed. They discreetly get down to the bottom of the nearest hedge, or place a field or two between themselves and the Owl's hunting ground.

"More than any other bird, perhaps, the Short-eared Owl deserves to be regarded as a special dispensation of Providence. In ordinary seasons he arrives just when the myriads of rats and mice have been disturbed from the

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stacks and are wandering from field to field in search of new scenes of pillage. No one who travels much in the country can have failed to remark the large number of rats that get run over in the roads during the season when thrashing is in progress, and when we consider how few and far between fast carriages are upon country roads we get some idea of the immense number of rats which find it necessary to cross the roads in their migrations; for those killed under the wheels of passing carriages do not, of course, represent a one-millionth part of the rat traffic. It is just at this point that the Short-eared Owl comes in and reduces our rat population to reasonable limits. He is capable, too, of rising to the occasion of an emergency. I recollect how, some years ago, the farmers in the north were at their wits' end on account of a plague of voles which overran the country. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that you could not have thrown a boot into the middle of a field without killing at least one vole. Then suddenly, as from nowhere in particular, appeared hosts of Short-eared Owls upon the scene, and hastened to prove by each day's meals that arithmetic is fallacious when it says that 'threes into one won't go,' if the threes are voles and the one is an Owl.

"How the Owls communicated to each other the intelligence that voles and field mice were plentiful in certain counties is one of those mysteries of bird life which we have not learned to fathom; although, presumably, it is effected by the instinct which all wild creatures have to follow others of their own species."

Of the natural enemies of the field vole, the Short-eared Owl is the greatest and most effective. In the infected areas, those of the Scottish Border counties and of the eastern counties in England, for instance, these Owls are particularly mentioned as thronging to the spot and rendering the greatest service in extirpating the pests.

Besides voles, this Owl preys upon other small rodents and members of the feathered tribe.

Of the local names given to the bird the following may be cited:—Hawk Owl, Marsh Owl, Mouse Hawk, Mouse Owl, Short-horned Howlet, Short-horned Owl, and Horned Oolert, as well as Woodcock Owl already referred to.

It breeds during April and May, placing its rude nest,

Tawny Owl

consisting of a few dry reeds or sedge leaves, on the ground amongst sedge or heather, but often no nest at all is built. From four to seven eggs are laid, the most laid by any of our British Owls, and these are almost indistinguishable both in colour and size from those of the species last under consideration. They measure 1·6 by 1·28 inches.

It has a harsh call, whilst the cry and the snapping of the bill is similar to others of its family.

It is very rarely that this bird perches on trees, and as may be assumed from the nature of its nesting site, it resorts to fens and moors, breeding in the north of our island, and appearing in the south as a winter visitor only.

The face is whitish; beak black; iris yellow; small black feather tufts on the head; blackish-brown circles round eyes; dusky-brown, with yellow edgings above; dull yellow ink-brown streaks underneath. Same length as Long-eared Owl.

XC.—OWL, TAWNY (*Syrnium aluco*).

I HAVE often seen this Owl nailed up on the keeper's vermin pole, and when rambling through some woodland glen I have many times come across it thrown into a barrow with a host of other useful feathered creatures, rotting, stinking and putrid, carrion for the insects to feed upon, and I have wished for a quiet half an hour with the brute who shot or trapped them.

Men and women everywhere, however, are waking up, and, although I will not go so far as the French scientist who has stated that in nine years man would be no more if the birds were all exterminated, yet I do sincerely appeal to the common sense and fair-mindedness of English men and women to see that useful and interesting creatures are not cruelly persecuted and tortured, and hurried out of existence. Surely the time has arrived when all lovers of Nature should wake up, and, as Mr Lange says, "that especially all teachers and educators awake and join the forces that are now working to preserve for ourselves and our children that great and beautiful Nature whose spirit we feel in Evangeline, and whose very soul speaks to us from Hiawatha. Let us not make the inspiration of future poets impossible."

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I have known a larder stocked by a pair of these Owls to consist of one hundred and fifty mice of various kinds, twenty-three rats, and several Sparrows and young *wild* Pigeons! It pilfers round old castles and in dense woods for young birds, rabbits, rats, moles, etc., and it will also feed, like most other Owls, on fish.

It is more generally known in the country as the Brown Owl, whilst other names given to it are Black Owl, Grey Owl, Ivy Owl, Wood Owl, Jenny Howlet, Howlet, etc.

It breeds in March and April, and often very much later, the hollow of a large tree being selected as a nesting site, but the old nests of a Crow, Magpie, Dove or squirrel are often selected. Sometimes the nest is placed on the ground, and occasionally in barns and outhouses. The materials used are similar to those of the Barn Owl.

The three to four white eggs are rounded in shape, and measure 1·8 by 1·52 inches.

Its voice is a loud clear hoot, something like "hoo-hoo, hoo-hoo-hoo," and a low whistle when pleased.

Young Owls are very curious downy little creatures; they soon learn how to take care of themselves, and snap at the intruder not only at night, but also during the day.

This bird is the largest member of the Owl family in Britain, measuring sixteen inches in length. The beak is greyish-yellow; dusky-blue iris; above reddish-brown, marked and spotted in various shades of brown, black and grey; on the scapulars and wing-coverts there are large spots of white; bars of dark and reddish-brown on primaries and tail-feathers; reddish-white underneath, with transverse brown bars and longitudinal dusky streaks; the legs are feathered right down to the claws.

XCI.—OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus ostralegus*).

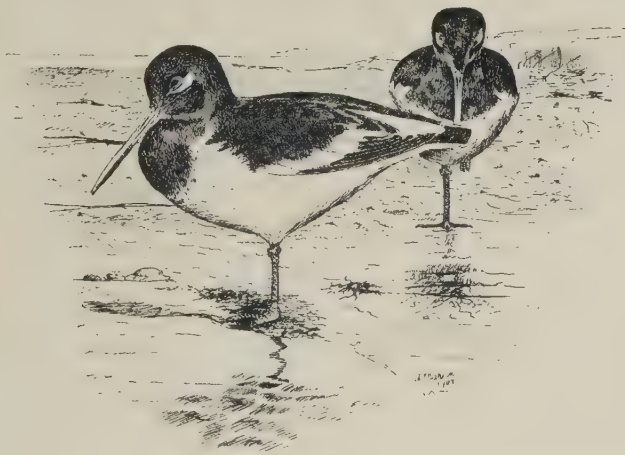
THIS highly-interesting bird is one of the most attractive found round our shores, and in his black-and-white plumage and orange-yellow beak, presents a striking appearance, and cannot fail to arrest the attention of the rambler by the seashore.

The Oystercatcher is a strong flier, and in its flight the sharply-cut wings are very prominent. When disturbed it soon shows the intruder that it resents such interference,

Oystercatcher

and circles round, uttering loud cries of defiance. It is a shrill cry or piercing whistle, rapid, rattling and clamorous. Hett compares it to "heep-heep-heep," "kléép, kléép," or "quip quip" (sharp and whip-like). On the wing, "my feel."

May and early June is the nesting season, the three or four eggs being placed on rough shingle or rocks. No materials are used if we except a few small stones, or fragments of shells, the eggs being deposited in a slight hollow only. They are a pale stone-colour, with a tinge of



OYSTERCATCHERS ($\frac{1}{4}$ Natural Size).

yellow, streaked and spotted with rich dark brown and ash-grey; sometimes blackish and dark grey.

The food consists of small shell fish, for the most part, also shrimps, sea-worms and other crustaceans, but it has not the partiality for oysters that its name implies.

The following local names may be given:—Chalder, Chaldrick, Mussell Picker, Oyster Picker, Pianet, Pie, Pied Oystercatcher, Scolder, Sea-magpie, Skelderdrake, Sea Piet, Shelder, and Tirma.

The plumage is jet black and pure white; orange-yellow bill; crimson irides; purplish-pink legs and feet; length, sixteen inches.

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XCII.—PARTRIDGE (*Perdix cinerea*).

THE Partridge is so well known that a detailed account of its life history is almost unnecessary, but sad as it is that in its preservation as a game bird, Hawks, Owls, Jays, Magpies and other similar birds are persecuted, the fact remains that the Partridge is, in my opinion, a most useful and beneficial species.

In newly-sown corn, clover and other fields the Partridge undoubtedly does commit a considerable amount of damage, which is often put down to the Rook and the Jackdaw, but it must not be forgotten that it also partakes very largely of an insectivorous diet. In this particular I may mention that it destroys wholesale the destructive grub of the turnip saw-fly, as well as slugs, various caterpillars, ants, etc., and it therefore seems a great pity that so many thousands of an eminently useful bird should be shot during the season; but game preservers, from the standpoint of self-interest alone, will see to it that their stock is well replenished year by year.

As an instance of the care that should be exercised by gamekeepers before attributing any tampering with the nests of their precious game birds to the Jay or Magpie, I relate the following incident which recently came under my notice. A gamekeeper acquaintance of mine missed sixteen Partridge's eggs from a nest, and as no human being had been near the spot, the theft was at once credited to a Jay or Magpie. However, while still in the vicinity of the despoiled nest, my friend saw a stoat run into a hole, and proceeding to dig the animal out, great was his surprise to find packed in rows under the ground, as if with human hands, over sixty Partridges' and Pheasants' eggs, all of which were absolutely intact, with the exception of one slightly cracked. Needless to say, the real culprit having been thus detected, it was not long before a very valuable addition had been made to the motley collection on the vermin pole.

How were the eggs carried by the stoat to its hiding-place without any breakages? I give it as my opinion that they were rolled along the ground.

To complete the diet of this bird various weed seeds must also be added, as well as buds and green leaves.

Partridge

May and the beginning of June is usually the time of nesting, but I heard of a well-authenticated instance in 1899 of a brood of five being hatched off out of a nest of seven on August 29th!

The nesting sites chosen by the Partridge are many and various. I have found the nest in a bank along a well-frequented highway, in the middle of a well-worn path, on the outskirts of a corn, grass or other field, and in a wood among an accumulation of leaves, etc.

A few stems of various kinds according to the situation, together with a few dried grasses and dead leaves, constitute the nest. As to the number of eggs laid it seems almost fallacious to state a given number as I have known several females to lay in one nest. I have found as small a clutch as six, and as many as twenty, and even thirty eggs have been recorded.

The colour is exactly the same as those of the Pheasant, pale olive-brown, but I have seen many bluish-green, something after the colour of a Tufted Duck's, and I have one in my collection of a rufous-yellow tint. They are much smaller than those of the Pheasant.

The Partridge is no musician; its voice resembling the cry of the Guinea Fowl, but more metallic, powerful and far reaching. There is another sound uttered, however, which words fail me to describe. It is like a guttural "ee-e-wit," as if the bird were in great distress, but seems to me to be the love-song.

The only local name I am acquainted with is perhaps one of the strangest in the whole glossary of local and old-fashioned names, namely, that of Bird.

The Partridge has a whirring but not long-sustained flight, and during the autumn goes about in little companies called coveys, which, when disturbed, rise *en masse*, and fly perhaps to another part of the field, or into an adjoining one.

Generally, the plumage is grey and reddish-brown, the male bird being distinguished by the horseshoe patch of chestnut on the lower breast.

It is twelve and a half inches in length.

XCIII.—PARTRIDGE, RED-LEGGED (*Caccabis rufa*).

THE French or Guernsey Partridge is one of the most beautiful game birds in the British Isles, and no mere description can in any way convey a true idea of the loveliness of its colours and markings. The most I ever saw together was in Woburn Park, Bedfordshire, in January 1897. Snow was on the ground, and there, crouching under the evergreens, I came across at least a score and a half of Red-legged Partridges. I have seen their eggs taken in this county, too, very frequently, and have also seen several nests in Hertfordshire.

It has a somewhat curious history, for upon its first introduction during the reign of Charles II., the attempts at naturalisation were quite unsuccessful. About a century ago, however, a further attempt was made, and this time with such success that, its wild character and fleetness of foot not recommending themselves to sportsmen, it was subsequently persecuted with a view to decreasing its numbers. Nevertheless it has been steadily increasing.

Some writers assert that this Partridge is wild, and resorts to uncultivated lands and the like. Those birds, however, which have come under my notice have not exhibited any more wild nature than the English bird, indeed not so much; and as to "not being a bird of the homestead," as that generally accurate observer Mr W. H. Hudson states, I have known it to build its nest on the top of an old shed in a farmyard, and to be so tame that I have passed within a yard of a dozen or more of them, and could almost have stroked them.

I have not found the Red-legged Partridge in woods, but generally in some grass or other fields, and the nest has nearly always been placed in the tall grasses on the outskirts of a hedgerow, or at the bottom of the hedge. But it will place its eggs anywhere in a field, on the ground, and the materials used are similar to those of the last-mentioned species.

The breeding season is April, May and June, and from twelve to eighteen eggs are laid. These are cream, well spotted and blotched with small speckles of reddish or cinnamon-brown. They are much larger than the eggs of



NEST AND EGGS OF RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE.

Fork-tailed Petrel

the better-known English Partridge, and the shells are very tough.

The food is made up of weeds, insects, grain, grass, clover, etc.

The voice is a musical, piping cry.

It has a white throat and cheeks, encircled with a band of black, which open out on the breast and sides of neck in the form of spots and lines, with a little white spotted over same; reddish-ash above; the flanks are marked with crescent-shaped spots; rust-red near the tail, black on centre with white borders; bright red orbits, beak and feet.

An inch more in length than the bird last dealt with.

XCIV.—PETREL, FORK-TAILED (*Procellaria leucorrhoa*).

THIS Petrel is also known as Bullock's and Leach's Petrel.

It breeds for the most part in the outer Hebrides and also on the coast of Ireland, but a premium has been set upon its eggs, and, as a result, many a pair of birds are robbed of their solitary egg.

The flight of this bird is a curious one, and it is by no means strong. It seems to hesitate in its flight, which takes the form of skimming and half circling.

When nesting it is difficult to flush them; they sit very tight in their burrows, etc., and when forcibly removed they eject, so Mr Kearton says, a quantity of amber-coloured oil.

June is the breeding season, and the nest, if such it can be called, is placed in burrows, beneath stones, and in cavities in stone walls and rocks. A very little lichen or moss, blades and stalks of grass, go to make up the structure, and very beautiful the solitary white egg looks when one removes the earth or rock or stone, for it is white and round, the larger end having a faint zone of small red specks.

The food is similar to that of its two relatives hereafter referred to.

The voice is a shrill "chirp," and when on the nest a note is uttered somewhat resembling that of the far better known Lapwing, "peur-wit."

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The bird is a little larger than the Stormy Petrel, being about the size of the Swift.

The general colour of the plumage is sooty-brown ; upper tail-coverts white, some of under tail-coverts same colour ; tail, very forked ; brown irides ; dusky black bill, legs and feet. About seven inches in length.

XCV.—PETREL, FULMAR (*Fulmarus glacialis*).

WHEREAS the Stormy Petrel is only about six inches in length, and the Fork-tailed Petrel an inch longer, the present species measures from nineteen to twenty inches ! When comparing the three birds it seems hardly credible that the Fulmar species belongs to the same family, for in one case we have a bird about the size of a Sparrow (the Stormy Petrel) and another (the Fulmar Petrel) as large as the Gulls, at anyrate the Black-headed and Common Gulls.

The breeding stations are similar almost to the Petrel last reviewed, though I am not aware that the Fulmar breeds off the Irish Coast like the preceding species.

In its flight this bird much resembles the Gulls, and even an experienced ornithologist might be excused if he mistook it, when flying, for a Gull. All three of these British breeding Petrels resort to the open sea when not engaged in the all-important breeding period, and, so far as my experience goes, they are rarely seen flying, hence it may be that this accounts for the fact of the Fork-tailed and Stormy Petrels being bad fliers. This remark does not, however, apply to the Fulmar, as its flight is graceful and well sustained.

Towards the end of May and June the breeding season is in full swing. Hardly any materials are used in the construction of the nest, often none at all ; when any, just a sprinkling of dry grass.

The egg is laid in burrows in the earth, but not at a great depth, and on the face of some perpendicular or sloping sea cliff. One egg only is laid, and this, when fresh, is pure white, but, as is the case with the eggs of a great many sea and other water birds, it soon gets stained and soiled, and Richard Kearton says that "the strong odour always present on it prevents the possibility of a mistake in

Stormy Petrel

identifying it." How true this may be I cannot say, but it is the most curious way of identifying a bird's egg which has ever come under my notice. Mr Kearton has certainly struck an entirely novel mode of identification in this respect. The texture is rough and chalk-like.

The food consists of offal, blubber and meat, and the Fulmar may well be described as one of the scavengers of the sea. It consumes the remains of animals and animal garbage, as well as the garbage of fish and whales. Captain James Ross states that it is of great importance to whale fishers, by guiding them to those places where the whales are most numerous; and it gives notice of the first appearance of these animals at the surface of the water by crowding to the spot from all quarters.

This Petrel is a very silent bird, and Charles Dixon notes that he once visited thousands but not a sound was uttered.

The local names known to me are as follows:—Malduck, Mallemoke, Malmarsh, Molly, and Northern Fulmar.

The Fulmar has a yellow bill; grey legs and feet; mantle and tail the same; dusky quills; white on head, neck and underneath.

XCVI.—PETREL, STORMY (*Procellaria pelagica*).

THIS bird is the smallest of the web-footed race of aves in the British Isles, in fact I believe I am correct in saying in the world. Ever since the days of childhood I remember hearing of the Stormy Petrel and Mother Carey's Chicken, and the name is as familiar to most people as the Robin or the Wren, yet I doubt if one person in a hundred has ever seen the bird, or has the slightest idea of what a dapper little feathered creature he is! Country people have been surprised when I have described this bird to them as being no larger than a Sparrow, and yet web-footed and a sea bird, braving the most tempestuous storms, riding safely and easily upon the crest of the storm-tossed waves, and possessing an endurance which, for so diminutive a bird, is certainly remarkable.

The name of Petrel appears to be derived from Peter, that eminent apostle who attempted to walk upon the waves, and the reason for such a derivation seems to be

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because of the Petrel's habit of paddling along on the top of the waves as if in the act of walking.

The habits of the Petrel are very peculiar, and it appears to me that our knowledge of them has yet to be greatly added to. At present it seems to be extremely limited, but there is this to be said about it: Petrels are for the most part nocturnal in their habits, they obtain their food mostly by night, and, other than during the breeding season, are far away from land, alone on the open sea, and thus observation is somewhat difficult.

The Stormy Petrel strikes me as being the most extraordinary of the three species here recorded, for when on the open sea, without a bird in sight, I have known the water round about the boat or other craft to become literally alive with them when the fat in the fry-pan has been thrown overboard! They apparently consider this a great delicacy, and it is absolutely the best way I know of for finding out whether there are any Petrels about. Alone on those vast oceans of water, with not a living soul or habitation in sight, miles and miles from land, the sudden appearance of several of Mother Carey's Chickens leaves upon the mind an impression of curiosity and amazement.

As to the name of Mother Carey, the legend goes, I believe, that this old lady poses as a witch of the sea, and that in her excursions and various exploitations she is accompanied by the Stormy Petrel! Legendary lore is, without doubt, stranger than fiction.

Other local names known to me are those of Allamotti, Assilag, Gourder, Horn Finch, Little Peter, Mitty, Spency, Storm Finch, and last, but not least, it is called in some districts Witch, an extraordinary bird name indeed.

The breeding season is of much longer duration than its two predecessors, extending as it does from June right away to September.

Nothing but a few fragments of the stalks of plants, and perchance a few blades of grass, are used in the construction of the apology for a nest, and this is placed under large stones, in the burrows of rabbits, and in holes in old walls and cliffs.

The usual one egg is white, about the size of a Black-bird's, and sparingly sprinkled with very small spots of brown.

Red-necked Phalarope

Many ornithologists omit to mention the food of this Petrel. My observations lead me to suppose that it will feed upon any eatable things found floating in the sea, and crustacea and mollusca generally.

Like others of its family this bird emits from its mouth, when held in the hand, an amber-coloured oil, and with this oil the young Petrels are fed, the fluid being injected into the mouths of the fledglings by the parent birds. How this oil is obtained, and why this species of birds should be of such an oily nature, science has yet to enlighten us. I have known a fisherman when he has been out fishing at night to catch a Stormy Petrel and kill it, stick it on to some board, head downwards, and light it in place of a candle! The carcase of the bird has burned as brightly and uniformly as the best wax candle, obviously because of the oil with which its whole form is saturated!

Mr Hett has described the voice as: Call, "kekerek-ee"; when nesting, a plaintive "weet"; when on the nest, a warbling "chatter."

For the most part the plumage is black, with the exception of the base of the tail-coverts, and the edges of the wing-coverts, which are white; black bill and feet.

It is six inches in length.

XCVII.—PHALAROPE, RED-NECKED (*Phalaropus hyperboreus*).

THIS interesting species is one of the dozen vanishing British breeding birds, and at the present rate of persecution the day does not seem far distant when it will have entirely disappeared from our avi-fauna.

It seems in the case of this bird that the indiscriminate collector has much to answer for. Such an one is prepared to pay almost any price for a clutch of British-laid Phalarope's eggs, so that the searching of the egg dealers and their employees increases by leaps and bounds, and very few nests escape the notice of these marauders. But as I have so often said, and say again with emphasis, if there were no receivers there would be no thieves, and it is the indiscriminate collector who is mostly to blame, yet he himself is one of the first to complain of the decrease of a certain rare bird, and aids considerably in hurrying its extermination.

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Years ago this bird used to breed in Perth, Inverness and Sutherland, but at the present time its breeding area is restricted to various islands in the north and west of Scotland and in the west of Ireland; the precise localities being best left unmentioned.

The extermination of the Phalarope is all the more regrettable because it is such an interesting, useful, and docile creature, and it does seem most wanton that it should be hurried out of existence to satisfy the greed of collectors.

This is an aquatic bird and in its habits much resembles the Coot. It is an expert swimmer, a rapid and powerful flier, and when seen on land, and that is not often, is very fleet of foot, graceful and captivating.

June is the breeding season, and the nest is generally placed in a swampy and grassy locality, in a slight hollow in the ground. Sometimes in a tuft of grass or rushes. A little dry grass is used, and on this the four pyriform eggs are laid. These are pale buff or olive, thickly blotched, spotted and speckled with various shades of dark brown and a few spots of faint grey.

The food consists of worms and small marine creatures, but for the most part the diet is made up of insects.

The voice is a shrill, clear "weet," and among the better known local names the following may be given:—Brown Phalarope, Coot Foot, Half Nebb, Red-necked Coot Foot, Red-necked Lobe Foot, Scallop Toe, Red-throated Phalarope, and Red Phalaroper.

For the most part these are gregarious birds.

The female is ash-grey on head, hind neck and shoulders; dark grey, with a rufous mixture, above; on the wing is a bar of white; chestnut neck; upper breast same colour as head; white under parts; black bill; greenish legs and feet. Seven inches and three-quarters in length. The male is smaller, and is not so gaudily attired as his mate.

XCVIII.—PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*).

THE history of this well-known game bird, at least so far as concerns our own country, is rather a curious one. Towards the end of the eighteenth century there was intro-

Pheasant

duced amongst game preserves a stock of Chinese Ringed-neck Pheasants, known by the Latin name of *Phasianus torquatus*, and these have interbred with *Phasianus colchicus* to such an extent that in some districts it is almost a rarity to come across a pure bred bird of the latter variety, the white ring being present in many of the birds seen nowadays. Probably this is why it is called in some localities the Ring-necked Pheasant, whilst two other localisations are Cock-up and Long-tail.

This bird does a great deal of harm and a considerable amount of good. The first named in the way of devouring peas, turnips, beans, grain, clover, young wheat, and especially buckwheat. The benefit conferred upon the farmer and landowner is due to the bird's great partiality for the wireworm and various insects, berries, acorns and weed seeds, whilst the many fledglings are fed upon ants and ant-cocoons, and various other insects.

The merits and demerits of the Pheasant need not, however, be written about, for he is too valuable a game bird to be injudiciously interfered with as to what he shall eat and what he shall drink. Game birds are raised and protected to give sport, and whether they do more harm than good, those birds of prey which may take a stray egg or chick of a game bird are the victims singled out by the rabid game preserver and not his precious semi-domesticated game and grouse, no matter whether these latter are far more destructive than the birds of prey themselves. If sportsmen were agriculturists a different story might be written.

This bird interbreeds, too, without difficulty, with other gallinaceous species, and this in a wild state, producing hybrids of various descriptions.

During March, when the pairing season is in full swing, these birds may often be observed fighting a battle royal, and they give vent to their feelings in no half-hearted manner.

The flight of the Pheasant is well-known ; for a bird of this order it is an extremely fast flier, but it is rare indeed that I observe what may be termed a well-sustained flight.

April and May are generally the months when the wild Pheasants are breeding. The nesting sites much resemble those of the Partridge, and I have found the nest on a stack in a similar manner to the Red-legged Partridge.

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The eggs vary in number, and more than one hen lays in the same nest, when an exceptionally large clutch is found. A fair average number is from seven or eight to thirteen or fourteen, and the colour is exactly similar to that of the Partridge, although I have seen a good many bluish-green specimens.

The crow, and the alarm cry "cock-up, cock-up, cock-up," is known to every resident in the country.

Green, blue and yellow metallic reflections on head and neck; bare on sides of head, scarlet, spotted minutely with black; plumage generally marked with spots and bands of brown, red, purple, green, yellow and black. The female is less gaudy, being light brown, and feathered on the sides of the head.

The length is three feet.

XCIX.—PIPIT, MEADOW (*Anthus pratensis*).

THIS Pipit, the first of the three with which we have to treat, does not seem to me to be at all well known in the country. I have inquired many times of old country rustics whether they know the bird, and they have almost invariably replied in the negative. However, on bringing a specimen to their notice, they have said, "Why, that is a Titlark!" There is little doubt that this is the name by which the Meadow Pipit is more generally known, and as the Tree Pipit, a summer visitor only, is also subject to the same localisation, a good deal of confusion arises when one is told that there are "Titlarks" in a certain district, etc.

It possesses a host of local names, and I will at once dispose of them. Here they are: Bog Lark, Cheeper, Grey Cheeper, Heather Cheeper, Heather Lintie, Ling Bird, Meadow Lark, Meadow Titling, Moor Tite, Moor Titling, Moss Cheeper, Pipit Lark, Teetick, Teetling, Titling, Water Linnet, and Wekeen.

It delights in running along the ground in search of food, and this it does in a lively and attractive manner. During the autumn and winter months, if I want to find this bird, I betake myself to the nearest sheepfold, and here I am rarely disappointed. For the most part it is an insectivorous bird, and, this being so, I am of

Meadow Pipit

opinion that it resorts to the folds for the purpose of feeding on the small insects, etc., which infest the sheep. It will also be found at the seasons named on manure or refuse heaps.

The song is uttered in a somewhat similar manner to that of the Tree Pipit, that is to say, it commences and



NEST AND EGGS OF MEADOW PIPIT.

utters its song when on the wing, for the most part on the return journey. It will start its flight from some low perching place, such as a low bush, cliff, gate or wall, but I have never yet observed it start from a tree as in the case of the Tree Pipit. In my estimation the song is not nearly so beautiful as that of the summer visitor only; it is not so powerful nor various, neither are the notes so rich. Hudson has given a description of it, thus:—"To sing he soars up to a height of forty

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feet or more, then glides gracefully down, with tail spread and wings half-closed and motionless, presenting the figure of a barbed arrow-head. In his descent he emits a series of notes with little or no variation in them, slightly metallic in sound, and very pleasing. These notes are occasionally repeated as the bird sits motionless on the ground." On lonely moors and wastes, however, the song is very pleasing and welcome, for in these solitudes it is indeed a pleasure to the bird lover to hear even the most discordant bird notes; it relieves the solemnity of the stillness.

During the winter this bird is gregarious, and fairly large flocks may often be seen.

May and June is the breeding season, and the situations chosen for a nesting site are similar to those of the Tree Pipit, but sometimes the nest is placed in a meadow. The materials used consist of roots, wool, grasses and moss, with a lining of finer grasses and a sprinkling of hair. Five or six eggs are laid, and these are in general colour reddish-brown, mottled over with darker brown.

The food is made up of caterpillars, small beetles, etc., and seeds.

There are about forty Pipits recognised by ornithologists, and we may well congratulate ourselves that in this and the Tree Pipit we possess two of the best songsters included in that number.

Above, the colouring is ash, with an olive tinge, dark brown on centre of each feather; dull buffy white underneath, profusely spotted with dull brown.

The hind claw is longer than the toe, and slightly curved. Length, five inches and three-quarters.

C.—PIPIT, ROCK (*Anthus obscurus*).

THIS Pipit is fairly common on our coasts, especially where rocks are plentiful, and its name is well given, for it is for the most part a Pipit of the rocks. However, Macgillivray called the bird the Shore Pipit, and perhaps this is rather a better name. Our present ornithologists, however, call it the Rock Pipit, and although Charles Dixon has stated that it might be re-named "Sea Pipit" by way of a compromise, it may be fatal at this time of day to alter it. The local names given to this bird may

Rock Pipit

opportunistically be mentioned at this stage. Those known to me are : Dusky Lark, Field Lark, Rock Lark, Sea Lark, Sea Lintie, Sea Tit or Titling, Shore Lark, and Shore Pipit.

It is a most interesting bird, the more so because of its resorting to the coasts, and its song is all the more welcome for the reason that the usual cries of sea birds are by no means musical, and it is a rich treat to hear the strains of the Rock Pipit, when rambling, or rather climbing, over rocks and boulders. It is a most pleasant diversion from the shrieks of Gulls and other sea birds, and it is one of the very few Passerine birds found along the British coasts.

It is a lively and engaging bird, and by no means shy, flitting about, cheeping as it goes, from place to place without changing its plans, perching for a moment on some clod or pebble along the shore. Like its congeners, the Rock Pipit utters its pleasant little song when on the wing, soaring into the air, but not to any great height, coming down in the manner of the Meadow and Tree Pipits, and it is in the downward flight that the pretty notes are uttered. It is by no means such a fine songster as the Tree Pipit, but its musical abilities are certainly not far behind those of the Meadow Pipit, but, as already mentioned, the surroundings which this bird frequents are usually of such a wild and rugged character, that its song charms to a much greater extent than it would otherwise do. The strains are short, but what there are may be said to be very sweet and beautiful. The alarm-note is similar to that of the preceding species.

The nesting season commences towards the end of April, and the nest is placed under stones, in a rabbit burrow close to the shore, holes, or ledges of sea cliffs. Seaweed, coarse bents, and occasionally moss is used, and the lining consists of finer bents, and sometimes horsehair. The four or five eggs are greenish, and mottled with dusky-brown or dark cinereous markings.

The food consists of marine insects and worms, small crustaceans, and in the autumn and winter months, small seeds.

Greenish-brown above, darker brown on the centre of each feather ; over the eye is a whitish streak ; dull white underneath with spots and streaks of dark brown. The hind claw is much curved, and is the same length as the toe.

Six inches and a quarter in length.

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CI,—PIPIT, TREE (*Anthus trivialis*).

THIS Pipit is a summer visitor only to the British Isles, generally arriving amongst us in mid-April. It spends the winter in Africa, Persia and India.



TREE PIPIT ($\frac{1}{3}$ Natural Size).

Wooded districts in the cultivated parts of the country are the resorts of the Tree Pipit, and if you

“ Know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,”

there, if there are trees hard by, you will very probably meet with this bird “in the season of the year.”

I always listen attentively about the middle of April

Tree Pipit

for the glorious trill of the Tree Pipit, and watch with eager eyes for a sight of the first ascent from some outside bough, or topmost branches, of a tree. It seems to be brought home very forcibly to the lover of rural life that the summer is really near at hand—"the season of the year," as the poet has put it—when this bird is seen or heard.

It is by far the best songster of the three Pipits which



NEST AND EGGS OF TREE PIPIT.

are included in these sketches; the song is sometimes uttered when the bird is perched on a tree branch or on telegraph wires, but mostly when it has soared some twenty feet in the air, and then commences its slanting, downward flight. It does *not* always alight on the tree from whence it started, as some writers state, for I have often observed it come straight down on to the ground or on to another tree. I have also frequently listened to it uttering its song when upon the ground.

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I know a certain tree where one of these birds may almost always be looked for about the middle of April, and this clearly proves that it returns to the same haunts each year; in fact, this remark also applies to a great many of our summer migrants. Its song is delightful and captivating. To me it seems to consist of a delicious Lark-like trill, with a few deep Nightingale-like notes interspersed. It increases in volume as it is uttered, and finishes with one final blast. The Common Wren's song often reminds one of that of the Tree Pipit's, minus the plaintive and prolonged double note, but the song of the Pipit is shriller, and uttered in such a manner that it is hardly comparable. Doubtless the song-flights often identify this bird; otherwise it might be overlooked. The season when it arrives, its lovely melodies and attractive flight, combine to make it a favourite to those who know it. I find few country people who really do know the Tree Pipit. It is more often called a Titlark, but as the Meadow Pipit, and even the Skylark, also go by that name, confusion is inevitable. Correspondents have written to me that they have seen Skylarks perching on and soaring from trees, and asked me whether such was not extraordinary. Not at all, I reply, because the birds thus seen were Tree Pipits without a doubt.

My observations lead me to suppose that this bird is, during the breeding season, of a solitary character, though I have seen three or four male Pipits engaged in their love-flights within quite a small radius. This is contrary to the observations of some ornithologists. Trees skirting woods, especially near a railway line, are very favourite haunts, the banks of the railway offering excellent nesting sites. Indeed, I find that this is the situation generally chosen, the nest being placed in, or near, a bush or grass tuft. Roots, wool, grasses, moss, with a lining of finer grasses and a sprinkling of hair, are used, and from four to six eggs are laid. Some varieties are purplish-red, others yellowish-white in ground colour, clouded and spotted almost all over with different shades of greyish-brown; whilst some are chocolate, streaked and blotched with darker tints of the same.

The breeding season is from the end of April until June.

The local names include the following: Field Lark,

Golden Plover

Field Titling, Meadow Lark, Lesser Crested Lark, Lesser Field Lark, Lesser Tree Lark, Pipit Lark, Short-heeled Field Lark, Tree Lark, and Grasshopper Lark.

The food is similar to that of the Meadow Pipit.

Upon the ground this bird presents a very pleasing appearance, reminding one somewhat of the Wagtails. When the song is finished for the season the trees are forsaken, and the remaining time the bird stays amongst us is spent upon the ground.

Above, the bird is ash-coloured, with an olive tinge, dark brown on centre of each feather; across the wing, a double band of yellowish-white; white on the two outer feathers of the tail; dull white on throat and near eye; buff breast, with dark brown elongated spots; lower parts dull white. Six inches in length.

CII.—PLOVER, GOLDEN (*Charadrius pluvialis*).

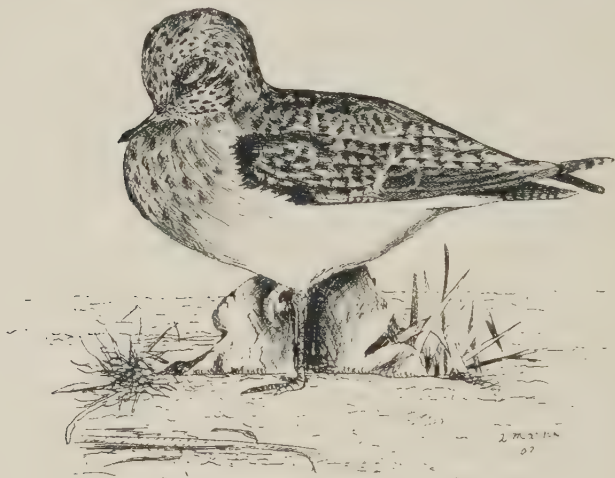
I HAVE already dealt with two members of this highly interesting family, *i.e.*, the Dotterel and the Lapwing, and now we reach the remaining three "Plovers," though there are other British breeding birds claiming kinship with the same family, but are not known by the name of Plover.

The chief characteristic of the Golden Plover is its plumage, for the underneath summer dress is altogether different to that assumed during the winter. That is to say, in the summer the under parts are intense black, but after the autumn moult pure white takes the place of the black. Not only is this the chief characteristic about the present species, but all the birds belonging to this genus are noted for the change undergone in the plumage each year. The name of Golden Plover is bestowed upon the bird because of the rich golden spots which decorate the upper parts, and this golden on the greyish-black ground has a very striking and picturesque effect.

During the autumn and winter months vast flocks of Golden Plovers visit us, and it is a pleasing sight to watch a congregation of them flying round and round, fairly high up, and then settling perchance in a ploughed field, and running about in the pretty and attractive manner they are wont to do.

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A note in my *Handbook of British Breeding Birds* as to the voice of this Plover reads as follows:—"Henceforth this bird, as a songster, holds a very high estimation in my opinion. Some little while ago I watched for a considerable time two or three hundred of these birds, and their sweet song and gentle twittering endeared the Golden Plover to me thereafter. It is not such a mournful, distressing cry as that of the Lapwing." In the breeding



GOLDEN PLOVER ($\frac{1}{4}$ Natural Size).

season, too, a shrill but decidedly musical note is rapidly uttered, and runs off into a trill.

This bird has long been regarded as a great delicacy for the table, but as most of the birds which breed in our country migrate south in the autumn, they escape the gun of the fowler and the sportsman, and those killed during the winter are probably visitors from the north.

The following local names may be given: Black-breasted Plover (and why not White-breasted, too?), Grey Plover, Whistling Plover, Yellow Plover and Green Plover.

The breeding season is May and June, and moors and mountain wilds are the nesting haunts. The nest, if such it can be called, is placed on the ground, and if any

Kentish Plover

materials *are* used they are made up of a sprinkling of heath or grass.

Four eggs are generally laid, and these are stone-colour, well blotched and spotted with very dark or blackish-brown.

The food consists of slugs, snails, worms and insects, as well as portions of various grasses and plants.

Greyish-black upper parts, spotted with gamboge-yellow; over the eye is a line of white, which runs down the neck and reaches the flanks; black underneath. The under parts change to white after the autumn moult, and the golden above is of a brighter character than earlier in the year. Eleven inches in length.

CIII.—PLOVER, KENTISH (*Agialitis cantiana*).

THIS interesting species is a summer visitor to our country, and nests sparingly in Sussex and Kent. Its numbers have become considerably lessened of recent years, due, as Mr Hudson says, to "the soulless Philistine who is without any feeling for wild nature, and whose vulgar ambition it is to fill a cabinet with the faded shells of eggs which he can label 'British-taken.'"

May is the season of nidification, and the eggs are placed among shingle or broken shells, or among sand by the seashore. The eggs number three or four, and are buff stone-colour, spotted, scratched and blotched with blackish-brown and faint inky-grey.

The food consists of sandworms, crustaceans, insects and molluscs.

The Kentish Dotterel is the only local name I am acquainted with. It utters a series of shrill repeated notes, and Charles Dixon compares the alarm-note to the syllable "ptirr," the more usual call-note being a loud, clear "whit."

White forehead, eye stripe, cheeks, chin and under parts; forehead above, black, and a band of the same colour extends from the base of the bill through the eye, and a large spot of black on either side of breast; light brownish-red on head and nape; ash-brown above; white on two outer tail-feathers.

The female lacks the black on the fore crown, brown on

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neck in place of black, and is generally of a duller character than her mate.

Length, six inches and three-quarters.

CIV.—PLOVER, RINGED (*Agialitis hiaticula*).

THIS very pretty little Plover has always been a great favourite of mine, not only because of its delicate black-and-white plumage, and orange bill, orbits and feet, but also on account of its sprightly disposition and its pretty note.

It is most entertaining to watch this Plover by the seashore, running about in a most agile and attractive manner, picking up insects, worms, shrimps and refuse. It is not exclusively a bird of the seashore, for it also inhabits the margins of lakes and rivers, and has been known to breed at a considerable distance from the sea.

It is a sociable bird, and when an intruder appears upon the scene exhibits little, if any, fear, flitting or running in front of the observer and uttering the while its plaintive alarm cry.

This cry is well known to those who stroll by the seashore; it is musical and very pleasant, more especially during the spring, when it is of longer duration and sweeter, more in the nature of a love-song, which it undoubtedly is.

April, May and June is the breeding season, and the situation chosen as a nesting site is usually a mere depression scratched in the shingle or sand. Occasionally a few pieces of dry grass serve as a lining, and it is stated that the "nest" is sometimes "paved" with small pebbles or broken shells.

The four eggs are pointed in the usual manner of Plover's eggs, and if anything, rather more so than those of any others of its family breeding in our country. They are cream-coloured, spotted and streaked with black.

It possesses a variety of local names, amongst them being Dull-willy, Land Lavrock, Ringed Dotterel, Sand Lark, Sand Laverock, Sandy Loo, Shell Turner, Stone-hatch, Stone Plover, Stone Runner, Wideawake, and Alexandrine Plover.

Black forehead, lores and gorget; white band across



RINGED PLOVERS ($\frac{1}{4}$ Natural Size).

Pochard

forehead, eye stripes, collar and lower parts the same ; light brown on nape and upper parts ; white on outer tail-feathers ; orange bill, orbits and feet.

The black collar of the female is not so prominent as in the male.

Seven inches and three-quarters in length.

CV.—POCHARD (*Fuligula ferina*).

THIS Duck has of late years become rarer as a British breeding bird, probably because of its haunts being disturbed and cut up as a result of the triumphal march of civilisation. Still the Pochard breeds regularly and in fairly good numbers in Great Britain and Ireland. In its habits it much resembles the Tufted Duck, and it resorts to fresh water more than the sea.

Why so many names have been bestowed upon the bird I cannot imagine, but in collecting information the following localisations reached me: Atteal Duck, Attle Duck, Black-headed Wigeon, Blue-poker, Dun Bird, Dun Cur, Great-headed Wigeon, Poker, Red-eyed Poker, Red-headed Pochard, Red-headed Wigeon, Sandy-headed Pochard, and Vare-headed Wigeon.

It breeds during May ; the nest, which consists of sedge and dried grass, with a lining of down from the bird's own body, being placed in a tuft of grass, usually in the neighbourhood of a lake or marshy place, and is well hidden amongst herbage there abundant. From seven to ten eggs are laid, though as many as fifteen have been recorded. They are pale greenish-buff, or whitish-buff.

The food is of the ordinary Duck kind, *i.e.*, various vegetable matter, but the Pochard seems much more fond of diving than some of its relatives.

This bird is considered a great delicacy for the table.

The voice is a harsh, quick cry, when alarmed, similar to that of the Tufted Duck. It also utters a low whistling call-note.

Head and neck chestnut-red ; black breast and upper back ; fine black-and-white frecklings on the mantle ; greyish-white underneath ; black tail-coverts ; black bill, a blue band across the centre ; red irides ; bluish-grey legs and feet. The female is dull brown, and possesses a white chin.

Nineteen and a half inches in length.

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CVI.—PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus mutus*).

THIS beautiful Grouse, to be appreciated and admired, has to be seen in its native haunts, not as it is strung up in some London poultry shop. In the British Isles its range is extremely limited, being found for the most part on the higher hills of Scotland. In fact, wherever the Ptarmigan is found, it inhabits the highest parts of mountain ranges, where trees are unknown.

There is a curious history attached to this bird's presence in our country which is worth recording here. It seems that at the glacial period the north and north-western part of Europe was one continuous sheet of ice, not forgetting what is now the bed of the North Sea, and this being so, it was a matter of no difficulty for Grouse to spread themselves over the whole continent and advance to Scotland. As the glacial period disappeared, the climate became warmer, and these birds, and other species found in the arctic regions, had perforce to choose one of two alternatives—*i.e.*, either to alter their mode of life, plumage, etc., so as to meet the requirements of the new conditions, or, repair to the mountains, where the old conditions still survived. The Willow Grouse chose the former method of change, and became the Red Grouse; the Ptarmigan adopted the second and remaining course, and was, and still is, the Ptarmigan.

It has never been known to inhabit Ireland, whilst its occurrence in Wales is open to some doubt.

Among the local names given to this bird are those of Rock Grouse, Snow Chick, White Game, White Grouse, and White Partridge.

May and June is the breeding season, and a mere depression in the ground on some mountain side is used as a nesting site. Sometimes a few twigs, such as heather, and blades of dead grass are used, but generally none whatever.

The seven to ten eggs are yellowish in ground colour, blotched and spotted with rich dark brown.

The food is made up of heath shoots, mountain berries, buds, and leaves.

The vocal powers are by no means strong or powerful, consisting of a strange, low, croaking cry.

Puffin

This bird, like most Grouse, has three moults during the year. Its winter dress is white, thus affording it much protection when the ground is snow covered. In the summer months the feathers are dark coloured, and as autumn approaches they become grey, matching in a very wonderful manner the surroundings of its home at this season of the year. In a mild winter more of the autumn feathers are retained than during a severe winter, when a pure white plumage is so essential for protective purposes.

Length, fifteen inches.

CVII.—PUFFIN (*Fratercula arctica*).

Of all the British sea birds—in fact we might say of all the British birds—there are none more striking in appearance than the bird now under consideration. Fishermen call it the Sea Parrot from the shape of the tremendous and curious beak. A peculiarity with regard to the beak is that it is larger in the breeding season, and that the specially developed sheath, which covers it, drops off after the all-important work of incubation is over.

Puffins are most numerous in the north of our island. On the isle of St Kilda they are very plentiful, so much so, that six hundred and twenty birds have been “bagged” by one man in a day. When I say “bagged” I should perhaps explain that a curious “sport” is carried on by the St Kildans—that is, they use a light deal pole, with a hazel twig on the end, a running noose of horsehair, and Gannet quills attached. They dexterously slip the noose over the bird’s head, and so secure him.

In its native element this is a most interesting and curious bird. At all times it seems to strike the observer with some new mannerism, and one never tires of watching the bird in its entertaining life habits.

As a fisher the Puffin is an expert—he will not only catch fish in a manner surprising to the onlooker, but has the faculty of holding several small fish crossways in the mouth whilst he stills goes on diving and seeking for more of the finny tribe. How the bird manages this very clever habit is a mystery that has yet to be solved.

May and June is the breeding season, and the situation chosen as a nesting site varies considerably. Sometimes

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it is in holes around, or in rocks, clefts, crevices and crannies; often in the burrow of a rabbit, and in the turf near the summit of cliffs, and they are very fond of burrowing in the soft peaty soil at St Kilda. When any materials are used, they generally consist of a sprinkling of grass or roots, but more often no great preparations are made for the reception of the one solitary egg. This, when first laid, is nearly white, but it soon becomes soiled—that is, spotted and marbled with a tinge of ash colour.

The call is something after the style of “a-r-r,” to “o-r-r,” and sometimes “orr-a-orr.”

It possesses many local names; amongst the most prominent may be mentioned those of Ailsa Cock, Ailsa Parrot, Bass Cock, Bonger Cockandy, Coulterneb, Gulden-head, Knife-bill, Marrot, Mullett, Pope, Sea Parrot, Shearwater, Skrabe, Tammy Norie, Tommy, Tommy Noddy, and Willock (young).

Above, the plumage is black, other parts white; the curious bill is bluish at the base, yellow in the centre, bright red at the tip; orange-red legs and feet.

Twelve inches in length.

CVIII.—QUAIL (*Coturnix communis*).

THERE seems to be some doubt as to this bird's present distribution in our country. Two of the best-known ornithologists of the day have told me that they would hesitate before including it as a regular British breeding bird; whereas an equally well-known authority said “include it by all means.” As I personally know of certain districts where the bird regularly breeds, including Ireland, it is very evident it must be accorded a place in our list; moreover, there are other widely-separated localities in Britain which it undoubtedly visits each summer. There is no doubt, however, that the Quail is not nearly so numerous as in years gone by, and in Ireland, where it is found in larger numbers than in England, the bags of yore, consisting of four or five brace in one day, are rarely heard of nowadays. During the summer of 1899 a large increase was noticeable, doubtless owing to the dry summer, as a drougthy and prolonged summer is sure to result in more of these birds being

Quail

observed amongst us than in a wet season. The same occurrence was reported during the dry summer of 1893.

The Quail is a summer visitor to the British Isles, arriving some time in May from Egypt and Northern Africa generally, where the winter is passed, and departing in September. As with the Landrail, however, stray birds have been recorded during the winter, probably late hatchings.

The reasons for the decrease in the numbers of these birds which visit our shores are twofold, first, the Quail revels in plenty of cover, coarse thick grass, etc., and the progress of agriculture is slowly doing away with such-like haunts, secondly, on the spring migration some thousands of these birds are captured. The island of Capri is a famous netting ground, and it is computed that as many as sixty thousand birds constitutes *a fair catch* during the April migration.

Some sixty or seventy years ago one hundred and fifty thousand was looked upon as a fair catch in a good migration, and it will thus be seen to what an extent the number has been reduced, and the consequent diminution in those birds which eventually reach our shores.

May and June is the breeding season, and the situation chosen as a nesting site is generally in a hollow of the ground, in fields, such as corn, grass or clover. Occasionally a few dead leaves and blades of corn are used, but often none at all. Seven to ten eggs are laid, sometimes more. The colours vary, but are generally of a faint cream-coloured ground, mottled and clouded in some cases with reddish-brown, and in others spotted with dark brown, some of the spots being of large dimensions.

The food is similar to that of the Common Partridge, a bird the Quail much resembles, but it is about half the size of the former bird.

The vocal powers are shrill and consist of a piping cry of three syllables which has been compared to the words "wet my lips," or "wet my feet." It is repeated continuously with just a slight variation.

Black and reddish-brown is present on the head, with three parallel longitudinal streaks of a yellowish colour; ash-brown, with variegations of black and straw-colour, above; reddish-yellow neck, with a dusky-brown crescent of a double character; pale reddish-brown breast, with

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streaks of white; yellowish-brown bill and feet. The female is not so dark as her mate, and the double crescent on the neck is lacking.

Eight inches in length.

CIX.—RAIL, WATER (*Rallus aquaticus*).

THIS interesting little Rail is very shy, skulking in the reeds and amongst other aquatic herbage. It resorts to marsh lands, fens and similar localities, possesses very rapid movements, but a somewhat laboured and not long sustained flight.

It is not a common bird in our country, but is doubtless often overlooked.

It breeds from April on to July, placing its nest—which consists of dead leaves of the surrounding herbage—on the ground, among tangled reeds in marshes, osier beds and the like.

Six to nine or ten eggs are laid, and these are very similar to pale, or apparently faded, specimens of the Corncrake's eggs, the spots being less and fainter.

The food is made up of aquatic insects, small frogs, tadpoles, and the spawn and fry of fish.

It utters a loud, peculiar cry.

The local names known to me are those of Bilcock, Brook Ouzel, Brook Runner, Grey Skit, Skiddy Cock, Runner and Velvet Runner.

Red bill; olive-brown hind neck and upper parts, the centre of each feather streaked with black; grey cheeks, neck and breast; blackish flanks, with bars of white; brownish flesh-coloured legs and feet. The female is not so conspicuous in colouring as the male, and the wing-coverts are sometimes barred with white.

Eleven inches and a half in length.

CX.—RAVEN (*Corvus corax*).

THIS bird has been associated in our minds since childhood; we remember reading of it in our story and school books, and many people have heard of the Raven, and speak of it, yet there is considerable ignorance as to what

Raven

it is really like. I have heard a Rook called a Crow, a Crow a Rook, a Raven a Crow, a Crow a Raven, and so on! But who, having seen the Raven, can mistake him? He was the military standard of the Danes, an omen indeed of approaching desolation, and adopted, perhaps, in compliance with popular superstition, which rendered the bird itself the object of dread, the foreboder of calamity, disease and death.

The geographical distribution of the Raven is soon described—he is a citizen of the world. In the British Islands he is not now nearly so plentiful as in the past, but there are still many lonely districts where the bird regularly breeds. I hardly know why the gamekeeper and others should be so prejudiced against this member of the corvine race—he does not seem to be nearly so destructive as the Carrion Crow. His diet is made up of small animals such as rats, moles, etc., as well as grain, grubs, worms, fruit, eggs, birds, carrion and the like. He will also attack a young or sickly lamb, also hares and rabbits, but his food for the most part consists of *dead* animal matter cast up by the sea.

It is one of the earliest birds to breed, and sits as early as February.

The nest—often of very large dimensions, and the more so when built in trees—is placed in the topmost branches of very high trees, or in some cranny, or the crevice of rocks or sea cliffs. Roots and sticks are used outwardly, and a lining is made up of hair and wool.

Four or five eggs are laid. These are light green in ground colour, blotched and spotted with browns of various depths of colour, but some varieties are very dark.

Curious to relate, all the local names given to this highly-intelligent member of a highly-intelligent family, with which I am familiar, begin with C, as for instance, Corbie, Corbie Crow, Corby and Great Corbie Crow, but to us he is the Raven, and as such we prefer to know him.

Who has not heard of the *croak* of the Raven? That is the extent of his vocal powers in a wild state, but it may be taught to articulate quite plainly when kept as a pet, although it is by no means so good a talker as our old favourite the Jackdaw.

In its flight the Raven, on first rising, is slow and uncaptivating, but, when fairly on the wing, and high up,

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it becomes almost majestic as he is seen falling and rising in easy and powerful stages. With us the Raven now breeds on rocky parts and inland cliffs, but what with gamekeepers, shepherds and indiscriminate collectors, it is almost safe to include it as a vanishing British breeding bird.

The plumage is black, with purple reflections; black tail; iris with an inner circle of grey, and an outer one of ash-brown. Twenty-five inches in length.

CXI.—RAZORBILL (*Alca torda*).

THE Razorbill is a specially interesting bird to ornithologists, if for no other reason than that of being the nearest living relative of the now extinct Great Auk. Its beak and general appearance is very Auk-like, and we wish for the days of old when the now lost bird was a living creature.

In Britain this bird is decreasing, and for reasons which cannot accurately be determined. Each year some hundreds of birds are found along the seashore, cast up by the waves during a storm, but as to what causes this sad havoc the ornithological jury has not yet given its verdict. It has been suggested that this mortality may possibly be due to an epidemic to which this bird is subject, or to starvation; but it would be distinctly interesting if those resident near the haunts of these birds, and thus having the opportunity of studying their life and habits frequently, would pay particular attention to this matter, and let us know the result of their investigations.

This is a beautiful bird, and when seen diving, or floating on the water, presents a very attractive appearance, indeed its whole life and habits are distinctly interesting. They will associate with other sea birds, such as Guillemots, Puffins, etc., but, although frequenting the same cliffs, the Razorbill prefers not to mix with any other species.

As may be assumed from the foregoing, this bird is found by the sea, and during the breeding season on rocky precipices and cliffs. The nesting season is from the middle of May onwards, the solitary egg being placed in some crevice or hole in the rock. The egg is less

Redbreast

elongated and smaller than that of the Guillemot, and lacks the infinite diversity of colouring which is so characteristic of the eggs of the last-named bird. The ground colour is invariably whitish or white, tinged with some light buffy shade, and the spots and blotches, which are sufficiently abundant, are, some of a reddish or chestnut-brown, others of a very deep rich brown.

The food consists of small fish.

For the most part the Razorbill is a silent species; occasionally a long cry is uttered, after the style of a Gull, but lower, and more guttural.

The more prominent local names are as follows:—Alk, Auk, Bawkee, Black-billed Auk (young), Falk, Helligog, Hiogga, Marrot, Murre, Oke, Razor-billed Auk, Scout, Sea Crow, Skort, Willock (young).

Greenish-black above; dark brown throat; white under parts. The beak is black and axe-like, a white crescent-shaped mark across the deepest part.

Seventeen inches in length.

CXII.—REDBREAST (*Erithacus rubecula*).

NEXT to the ubiquitous Sparrow—hackneyed though the term may be—probably no bird is so well-known as the homely Robin, and if every bird suffered as little persecution what an increase of birds we should have.

The superstitions which have existed from time immemorial in regard to the present member of the feathered race have undoubtedly stood the bird in good stead, and many a hard-hearted country yokel often stops his cruel and unthinking practices when he of the red breast is encountered. I often wish there were similar superstitions existing with regard to the Goldfinch, the Bearded Tit, the Kingfisher, and other rare birds, for there is no doubt these members of the avine family would benefit thereby.

Well might the birds of the air resort to sighing and sobbing when they heard of the death of the Robin of our story books, slain by that cruel legendary Sparrow, and how thankful the successive generations of Redbreasts should be for the interest exhibited by their various feathered relatives in joining with one accord in doing

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homage to the Sparrow's victim. Had that brave Robin of long ago been allowed a fair stand up fight with the Sparrow, instead of being killed with the arrow which sped on its death-dealing course, I think I would have backed the Robin. He is a born fighter, and I doubt not that the Sparrow took a mean advantage of his victim



ROBIN ($\frac{1}{2}$ Natural Size).

when he dealt the death blow of which we have all read and sung.

Now it has struck me in writing these few introductory lines that one rarely sees bird fights between two or more species. I am quite aware of the constant quarrellings of the Sparrows among themselves, and of the pugnacity of the Robins one to another, but it is rare indeed in my experience that a battle royal is waged between two distinct species of birds. The Sparrow will drive the gentle House Martin away from under the eaves,

Redbreast

but the summer visitor submits quietly to the trying ordeal. The young Cuckoo bundles out of the nest its foster-brothers and sisters, but the foster-parents punish not the murderer, in fact seem to tend him all the more. Indeed, Lord Balfour of Burleigh has recently recorded an instance of the foster-parents ejecting their own offspring in favour of the foster-child! There seems much in this amicability among the feathered race which has been overlooked. I have yet to see a fight *in a wild state* between two distinct species of birds.



YOUNG ROBINS.

Birds of prey cannot be included as it is their living to kill, and, if needs be, to fight with their victims. As to the Robin, fights between these birds are frequent, and wage fast and furious. It has a favourite beat, and if another dares to intrude he must either retreat or take the consequences. So long, however, as he is not interfered with, the Robin is sociable towards his fellows, and, as a companion, exhibits a striking illustration of the nature and development of animal intelligence. Of its consciousness of protection and preferment for human companionship I need hardly write, nor of its striking appearance, as, perched on the garden fence, or upon the

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window sill or doorstep, he shows off to perfection that breast of red, and those saucy, bright, lustrous eyes. Who, also, has not noticed the long legs, and the long hops the bird takes, and how happy and engaged his whole life seems to be?

Of the song of this bird what shall I write? It is to my mind a somewhat melancholy one, but nevertheless one which we should highly appreciate because it is uttered fairly continuously throughout the year. When all other birds are silent, with the exception perhaps of the Common Wren, the Skylark and Mistle Thrush, the Robin sings on. He may be heard on a hot July day and in the depth of winter. The song consists, in the main, of but few notes, mostly pitched in one compass and with little variation, but it is uttered with such apparent consciousness, and, what I might call sweet loneliness, that it cannot fail to arrest the attention of the listener, and finds a warm place in the bird lover's estimation. The call-note of this bird always reminds me of the sound made when one unwinds a brass angling reel slowly, something like "tit-tit-tit."

The local names known to me are: Bobbie, Bob, or Bobrobin, Brow-rhuddyn (Welsh), Robinet, Ruddock, and Tommi-liden.

The nesting season extends from early spring to late summer, and I know of an instance of a nest and five eggs as late as November 19th (1897). The situations chosen as a nesting site are many. A hole in a bank, in an ivy-clad stump, in old cans and other utensils, flower pots, post and tree holes, crevices, ditch sides, etc., cover the majority of the situations I have found the nest in.

The structure is made up of moss, stalks of various plants and dead leaves, nicely lined with rootlets, wool or hair. Five or six eggs are laid, occasionally seven. These are white, more or less freckled with light red.

The food consists of worms, insects and scraps. It has been known to devour fourteen feet of earthworms per diem without increasing its weight. Now, fourteen feet of earthworms, taking large and small together, weigh about two and a-half ounces, whilst the bird itself weighs only one ounce!

The plumage above is olive-brown; red forehead and breast, with grey edges; white belly. A great deal of error exists as to the female bird. It is a little smaller than the male, and is not so gaudily attired.

Five inches and three-quarters in length.

Lesser Redpoll

CXIII.—REDPOLL, LESSER (*Linota rufescens*).

THIS bird is best known in the north of our island, but very large flocks come south in winter, and at such times it is an entertaining sight to watch the industrious creatures at work, searching for food, such as the seeds of the birch, etc. During this season it may often be seen in company with various other small birds, such as Titmice, and perhaps one or other of the Finches.

In summer the food consists of insects and their larvæ, and in winter various seeds are partaken of. In obtaining either, the birds present the most engaging manners, though in summer they mostly resort to the tops of high trees, where it is somewhat difficult to follow their movements.

May and June is the breeding season, and the nest is placed in low hedges and bushes, and in trees such as willows, alders, etc., which are found near the borders of ponds and streams in mountain or lake districts. The structure is decidedly pretty, being composed of dry grass, small twigs and moss externally, lined with the down of the willow catkins, and occasionally with feathers and hair.

The four or five eggs are pale bluish-green, spotted with orange-brown, and this for the most part at the larger end. Like most birds' eggs, however, those of this species also vary, the ground colour in some instances being greenish-grey, and the spots more of a reddish tinge.

The song powers are not great; it utters a delightful but extremely faint warble. The busy little fellow tries hard to sing, but it is in such a low compass that I have heard many people say it has no voice.

Of the local names known to me the following may be enumerated: Redpole, Cherry Linnet, French Linnet, Lesser Redpole Linnet, Little Redpole Linnet, Pea Linnet, Rose Linnet, and Stone Redpole.

It has a black forehead, lore and throat; deep crimson crown (sometimes I have seen a yellow crown, but this was assumed, I think, through being kept in captivity); reddish-brown above with dusky streaks; dusky wings and tail, with pale edges of reddish-brown; prominent rose-red breast; white on belly and lower tail-coverts. The female is not so bright as the male.

Five and a quarter inches in length.

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CXIV.—REDSHANK (*Totanus calidris*).

THIS bird, the second and remaining Shank which is entitled to a place in our list, possesses many curious local and provincial names. They are: Gambet Sandpiper (young), Pool Snipe, Red-leg, Red-legged Horseman, Red-legged Sandpiper, Red-legged Yelper, Redshank Sandpiper, Sand Cock, Striated Sandpiper, Teuke, Took, and Yelper.

It is by no means a common British breeding bird, but there are many districts in which it breeds, although it should be stated that, fond as the bird is of keeping to a favourite breeding haunt, from some of them it has now entirely disappeared. The haunt of this bird is a marsh or fen, sometimes inland or in the vicinity of the sea, and it may also be found on the tidal flats and saltings around our coasts. It is hated by the sea-fowler, because of its clamorous, clear-ringing cry, and all the feathered race found by the seashore within sound of its voice seem to apprehend that danger threatens in the same way that the birds of the woodland make haste to hide as they hear the sentinel of the woods—the Jay—uttering his danger signal.

It is a fascinating sight to watch a company of these Shanks waiting in the vicinity of the sea for the tide to go out before they commence their feeding operations. Then the flocks break up, and the birds take up various and scattered positions, and feed on insects, marine worms, small crustaceans and the like.

It does not possess a very striking flight, being somewhat laboured and slow, but when its breeding haunts are intruded upon, the bird becomes very angry and noisy, and does not hesitate to dash down towards one. Moreover, when it has young, or eggs well on the way to incubation, it will, like most birds included in the order to which the Redshank belongs, endeavour to lure the intruder away by feigning being wounded, and fluttering along the ground in an opposite direction to that where its eggs or young may be secreted.

The breeding season is April and May, and the nest, if such it can be called, is placed in some clump of grass or other herbage on well-exposed swampy commons or saltings, and is usually well hidden. It consists of a sprinkling of

Redstart

dry grass, a twig or so of heather, perhaps, and a little moss, but often the herbage around is trodden down by the birds and thus serves as a nesting site.

The four eggs—often it should be said only two or three—are cream coloured, spotted and speckled with dark brown.

Charles Hett writes the various cries and call-notes as follows: Call, “tyü,” or “t-lüe, tlüe” (wild and musical); alighting, “a-whew, a-whew, a-whew, a-whew”; alarm, “a-yelping,” “toodle, oodle, oodle, oodle” (flute-like), changing to “uhu, uhu, uhu” (whistle-like) as they depart; to young, “teä, teä.” Otherwise, summer, on ground, “too-ey, too-ey, too-ey” and a shrill trill. Winter, “tuke-tuke-tuke”; on wing, “tooo-tooo.”

The summer and winter plumage must be given. The former is pale brown on upper parts with close streaks and bars of umber; almost white secondaries; white rump, flecked with dusky; white tail-feathers with blackish bars; white underneath, with umber streaks on neck and breast; orange-red legs and feet. The winter plumage consists of ash-coloured upper parts; white rump and under parts, sparingly streaked and spotted with grey on the breast and neck.

Eleven inches in length; female a trifle larger than her mate.

CXV.—REDSTART (*Ruticilla phoenicurus*).

THIS bird has always been a favourite of mine, and I often wish it was more generally distributed amongst us during our summer. So far as my observations go it is by no means a common bird, and although I have rambled more during the past year than previously, I do not think the Redstart has been included in my notes on more than half a dozen occasions! I am of the opinion that it is a shy and recluse bird, and hence may often escape attention, but when once seen it is never forgotten.

It is a summer migrant, arriving about the middle of April, and departing for Northern Africa—its winter quarters—towards the end of August or early in September.

The bird appeals to me because of its beautiful flame-

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coloured tail-feathers, and it is a rare treat to see it alight along some sunlit hedgerow, spreading its tail fan-like in the act. Its plumage is of such a sober character that the lightning movements of the chestnut tail-feathers are thrown off to perfection and cannot fail to attract attention and court admiration.

In the country this bird is a general favourite for the reason that, like the Robin, it is often found near the homestead, in the garden or orchard, or in some outhouse or other building. It also affects ruins and old walls—curious to relate far away from the haunts of men—and here in the solitude it sings to the ivy-clad turrets and battlements—and perchance, in memory of those bold warriors who once trod the massive halls in shining armour and with glittering spurs—its low, soft and sweet song.

It cannot be said that it is a great musician; some writers assert that the song is monotonous, but to me there is no such thing as monotony in the avian choir.

It should be stated that it is a good mimic, and amongst its notes one can often identify those of other birds. When feeding the young I have noticed the parent birds make a curious hissing noise.

The prominent tail-feathers are responsible for nearly every local name known to me, and these are: Fire-tail, Bran-tail, Fire-flirt, Fiery Bran-tail, Red-fiery Bram-tail, Red-tail, and White-fronted Redstart.

This bird partakes of an insectivorous diet, and last summer I observed a pair on an old wooden fence, frequently hopping down Flycatcher-like into the grass and catching large grasshoppers! Caterpillars, spiders, beetles, butterflies, gnats, flies and other insects are also taken, and these it obtains in a similar manner to the Spotted Flycatcher.

The nesting season is from May to July, the situations chosen being on the rafters of a shed or other outbuilding, in a hole in a tree or wall, crevice of rock, and similar situations. The nest is a neat structure, and consists of dry grass, roots and moss, lined with hair and feathers.

The five or six eggs—the latter I have found more often than the former, and on one occasion as many as seven—are a pale uniform blue, occasionally tinged with a faint green shade, often very pointed at one end, and glossy.

The male bird has a white forehead; bluish-grey head

Rook

and upper part of back; black throat; bright bay on breast, tail-coverts, and tail, but the two middle feathers are brown. The female is grey above with a conspicuous tinge of red; inclining to whitish on throat and belly; pale red on breast, flanks and under tail-coverts.

Five and a quarter inches in length.

CXVI.—ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*).

PERSONS should bear in mind that the most important distinguishing features between a Rook and a Crow are that the adult Rook has a patch of whitish skin at the base of the bill, whilst in the Crow this is entirely absent; the Rook is much more glossy black than the Crow and is a shade smaller; Rooks, as everybody knows, nest in colonies and go about in flocks, whilst the Crow is a solitary bird, seldom more than two or three being seen in company, and they do not nest together after the manner of Rookeries. The food of the two birds is also entirely different.

Whether the Crow does more harm than good is an open question, but of the Rook there seems no doubt whatever that it is one of the most beneficial birds we have. It seems a great pity that the depredations of the Crow often lead to the persecution of the Rook, and the various crusades waged in the south of Scotland and elsewhere have taught those who were up in arms a lesson.

The destruction has been carried too far; Rooks *as well as Crows* were destroyed, and bitter complaints have been forthcoming as to large tracks of land being devastated by grubs. *Corvus frugilegus* has had to be re-instated, but it is extremely difficult to get Rooks to settle in a neighbourhood when once they have been stamped out, and unless the birds come of their own accord it is one of the strangest facts in the bird world that to obtain a Rookery, other than at the birds' own bidding, is a difficult and practically useless task. Hence those possessing Rookeries should prize and cherish them, because once they are broken up it is most likely the inhabitants will seek elsewhere, where they are better appreciated.

Now, what harm does the Rook do? It will take the eggs of game birds and fowls (and this statement I have

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not seen mentioned by any of those who have written against the bird); it will play havoc for a short period with newly-sown seed, plants and potatoes, and is somewhat troublesome in harvest time, but during the greater portion of the year, from the first stroke of dawn until late in the evening, whole parties are working the fields seeking the injurious wireworm—one of the greatest pests the farmer has to contend with—the grubs of the cockchafer and worms.

I have seen whole companies of Rooks in the grasslands tearing away with their strong bills at the roots—especially those which are going at all yellow—in their endeavours to get at the lurking grub, and although I must admit I have seen them in a barley field doing such things as would make me—if I happened to be the farmer—exasperated, I have seen that same barley field later in the autumn throwing as good a crop as one ever wished to see! During the last twenty or thirty years, however, farmers have changed their opinions with regard to these birds. They are increasing very rapidly indeed, and as they are such difficult birds to shoot—always seeming to keep just out of gunshot, as a result of their persecution in the past—trap or poison, there is no need for me to plead for their protection, or to extend the food question further.

From a delightful article in the *Globe* I cull the following for the benefit of my readers: "No word has been more faultily used than this word 'Crow.' The error dates from classical days, if not from a yet earlier period, and, thanks to it, a large portion of the corvine tribe has acquired a reputation as undeserved as evil. 'Ball' es Korakas,' swore the Greek ill-wisher, and we translate not less kindly, 'Go and be hanged!' The curse is in itself, perhaps, not worse than curses usually are; the evil lies in our own interpretation of the word 'korax,' corvus or Crow. The Greeks, it appears, were much of the opinion of the author of our second classification, that all things black and big, which fly, are Crows, and did not stop to think of the wide difference between the Raven that quoth 'Nevermore,' the Carrion Crow that smelt slaughter from afar, the thievish Jackdaw that produced ill grammar at Rheims, and the chattering (*Corvus*) Rooks that formed the 'black republic' of the trees. To remedy the injustice done to the republican it may be well to lay some stress on the qualities

Rook

that distinguish them from their tribal neighbours. However, about the Rook, whether in or out of a pie, everyone is agreed. He is a good bird: of good taste and of good omen; and except when young and succulent no one (farmers still excepted) would dream of killing him. A Rookery is a valuable possession, giving a savour of good augury and of great antiquity, so that new-comers to a locality have devised many and ingenious plans to tempt the pairing Rooks to build their nests. Therefore, let no one give him the bad name of Crow and shoot him; but rather let everyone, when he gets the chance, watch with admiration his long straight flight to his roosting ground, his diligent building, his noble attacks on evil grubs, his glossy plumage; then soon he will begin to respect the English Rook, and change his feeling of pain into one of pleasure when he re-reads how Mr Winkle brought down the boy by inadvertence instead of the Rook. It was the most sporting action that typical sportsman ever performed. And, lastly, let all avoid that contradiction in terms, that unscientific solecism, 'The Crows in the Rookery.'"

Rooks are not only sagacious, but they have a very tenacious memory. Mr Sowerby, in his book, *Rooks and their Neighbours*, gives a striking instance of this. After a wholesale slaughter in a Rookery, when most of the birds had forsaken their own *habitat*, he and a friend observed on a bare tree two Rooks, one of which was making a most peculiar noise. Wondering what it all meant, they were presently overtaken by the two birds, swooping down and uttering cries of anger. The next day, being out alone, the two birds on the same tree took no notice of Mr Sowerby; but, on being joined by his friend, the lord of the manor, they attacked and pursued them with loud cries as before. Unable to understand this, Mr Sowerby alone paid them a second visit, wearing, by accident, his friend's overcoat; when, to his amazement, down came the furious birds, following him with loud cries. That great-coat was the cause of all the disturbance. His friend had worn it a day or two before, and gone out with a rifle, and shot a young Rook on a neighbouring tree. Hence the frantic grief of the distracted parents.

It is interesting to stand underneath, or in the vicinity of a Rookery, and observe the various ways and mannerisms of the inhabitants. It is really surprising how their voices

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differ from the more generally known "Caws"! Some of them, if they could speak, would, I believe, tell us that they aspire as songsters, with their "Croos" and "Crewks," and some I have heard whining like a dog. It is remarkable how they just manage to keep out of gunshot! One has only to walk across a field in sight of a Rookery with a walking stick carried gun-like, or put the field-glasses to the eyes, and the whole company rise as in a cloud and give vent to their feelings. Walk across that same field without anything in the hand and observe if the same results accrue. A wonderfully intelligent and sagacious creature is the Rook.

To distinguish the Rook from a Crow when its voice is heard, if the number of caws uttered are not limited but are continuous, it is almost certain the Rook is the bird heard, but if the caws are limited to about three and are somewhat long-drawn, doubtless it is the Carrion Crow.

Of the flight of the Rook it is unnecessary to enlarge upon, and the only two local names known to me are the Bare-faced and White-faced Crow.

This bird is an early breeder. Nest renovation is usually well in hand by February, and in March, eggs are generally laid, indeed I have known young in the nest during this month. It may safely be asserted, however, that the breeding season ends in May. Mostly the nest is placed on the slender branches of tall trees, although not always, as I have seen them only twenty or thirty feet from the ground, but then they were at the extremity of such exceptionally dangerous branches to climb that they appeared quite safe from the nest robber, and the birds seem to know this. It has also been known to nest in tall laurels! They generally nest in companies, but isolated cases are by no means rare. When Rooks forsake a nest tree or trees of their own accord, it is stated that the trees have been attacked by insects and will probably die.

The nest is a somewhat dirty structure, consisting of twigs and sticks, plastered with clay and mud, with a lining of grass, wool, straw, and so on. Owing to the old nest undergoing annual repair it often assumes very bulky proportions.

The eggs number four to five. They are greenish in ground colour, more or less intense in shade, plentifully mottled and blotched with darker and varying shades of

Common Sandpiper

brownish-green. Some eggs of this bird closely resemble those of the Jackdaw.

It is interesting to notice that this bird covers up its eggs before commencing to sit.

To watch phalanx after phalanx of Rooks and Daws coming in at night to a favourite wood to roost (that is after the breeding season) is a sight not easily forgotten. The loud calls and cries are often quite deafening, and it is some considerable time before the birds seem disposed to settle down to rest.

Of the fights which take place during the nesting season, and of the shooting of young Rooks, mention need only just be made, but I might add in conclusion that the trees in which I have mostly found the nests of these birds are the elm, oak and chestnut.

The plumage is generally supposed to be black, but the violet reflections when the bird is examined closely are very beautiful; there is a white scurf at the base of the beak and nostrils, this region being destitute of feathers; greyish-white iris.

Eighteen inches in length.

CXVII.—SANDPIPER, COMMON (*Tringoides hypoleucus*).

THIS bird is a summer visitor, arriving about the 20th April from Africa, where it spends the winter. It is a sprightly, entertaining bird, and may be sought after wherever there are lonely and secluded spots by streams—where the water is not fast running—and other sluggish waters. South of Scotland it is not by any means common, but in the land of the thistle it is abundant. It is a captivating sight to watch the Sandpiper searching for food along the banks of some mere or stream, now running, now flitting, now probing after worms and insects. Small fry and crustacea is also partaken of.

May and June is the breeding period, and the nesting site is a small hollow in the soil on river or lake banks, generally pretty close to the water's edge, and hidden by a tuft of herbage. At times the nest is found in turnip or corn fields. The "nest" is a mere apology for such a structure, a sprinkling of sedge, moss, or dried grass suffices.

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The four eggs are large compared to the size of the bird. They are yellowish-white, with blotches and spots of deep brown or ordinary brown, and pear-shaped.

The note is a thrice-repeated one, clear and musical, and during the pairing season the male, whilst hovering in the air, utters a trilling note, which some writers call a song.

The local names include those of Fiddler, Sand Lark, Spotted Sandpiper, Summer Snipe, Willy Wicket and Sand Lavrock.

It is ash-brown above, with an olive gloss; white chin;



NEST AND EGGS OF COMMON SANDPIPER.

pale ash on neck sides, and breast streaked with dusky; white underneath and on extremities of outer tail-feathers. Eight inches in length.

CXVIII.—SCOTER, COMMON (*Edemia nigra*).

THIS is one of the Nigger-birds of the British Islands, and, when we come to consider it, we have very few black birds on our list, perhaps a dozen in all.

This Duck is more marine than any others included in our sketches, and its food consists of shell-fish.

Shag

It is also known as the Black Scoter, Black Diver, Black Duck, Scoter and Whilk.

The breeding season is May and June, and the situation chosen as a nesting site is on some island in the sea or lake. The nest consists of dry grass, a few twigs and dead leaves, with a lining of down, and is generally hidden among bushes, grass, or other herbage of a coarse nature.

From six to eight eggs are laid, sometimes one or two more. These are pale greyish-buff, smooth shelled, but not glossy. It is said not to breed until its second year.

A harsh cry is uttered, and it is stated that in the spring the male bird possesses a love-call, not at all unmusical.

The plumage above is a glossy black; orange on central ridge of the upper mandible. The female is blackish-brown above, dark brown below.

Twenty inches in length.

CXIX.—SHAG (*Phalacrocorax graculus*).

THIS bird, perhaps more often called the Green Cormorant, much resembles the Cormorant at a distance, but when one is close to the bird identity is no difficult matter as the Shag is not nearly so dark as the other species. It may be distinguished by its green plumage, and it does not possess during the breeding season the white patch on the flank. Moreover, the present bird is twenty-seven inches in length, whereas the Cormorant is thirty-six inches.

In their general habits the two birds certainly do resemble each other, though the Shag appears to be more sea-loving than its near relative.

It is not so numerous in our country as the Cormorant, but during the whole year there are many parts of our coasts where the bird may be watched in its engaging habits.

May and June is the breeding season, and the nest is placed in holes, crevices, ledges, etc., and in rocks and sea-cliffs. It is very bulky and untidy, composed of large and small sticks, sea-weed, turf, heather twigs, grass, etc.

The three to five eggs are in the first instance white, but soon become stained and soiled.

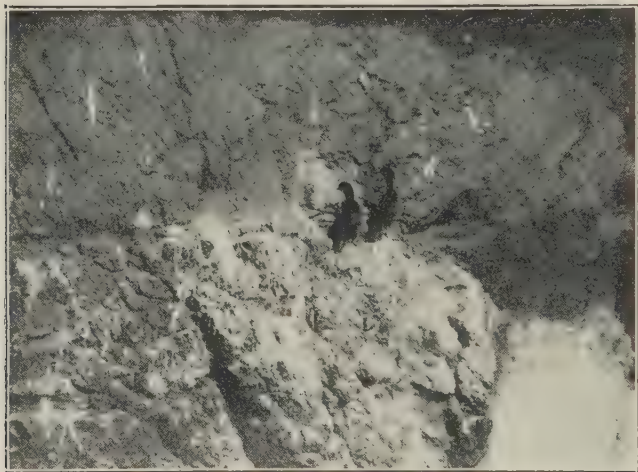
Fish constitute the diet.

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For the most part it is a silent bird, but possesses a call which has been compared to a harsh, guttural "croak."

Besides being called the Green Cormorant, the bird is also known as the Crested Cormorant, Crested Scarf, Crested Shag (young), Green Scout, Isle of Wight Parson, Scarf and Scart.

The bill is black; yellow at the base of the under mandible, the skin about the gape, black, and profusely studded with minute spots of yellow; emerald-green iris;



YOUNG SHAGS.

dark green on crown, neck and upper and under parts, with reflections of purple and bronze; black on wings and tail, legs and feet; in spring a crest on the forehead is prominent, but this is lost towards the end of May.

Twenty-seven inches in length.

CXX.—SHEARWATER, MANX (*Puffinus anglorum*).

THIS bird belongs to the Petrel family, and of the four which breed in our country it is probably the best known.

Like the Stormy Petrel, it is often to be met with

Common Sheldrake

thousands of miles away from land ; the sea is undoubtedly its home. It is nocturnal in its habits, and in the breeding season keeps pretty much to the seclusion of its burrows until night, when it goes off in search of food, which is made up of marine creatures of all kinds.

Similar to the Stormy Petrel it resorts to paddling, and when seen engaging in such, it is very interesting to watch. The name is derived from its habit of flying, or rather, gliding along just above the crest of the waves.

It is in the far north that this bird makes its home, its chief stations are on St Kilda, that is during the breeding season, for excepting at that time it spends its life upon the open seas.

At St Kilda the Shearwaters arrive as early as February, but May and June is the breeding season.

The nest—if such it can be called, consisting as it does of merely a few dry stalks, or a small bunch of grass, and often none at all—is placed in holes, beneath rocks, or in burrows underground in peat and other soil.

One beautiful white egg of fine texture is laid, and is about two and a half inches long by one and three-quarter inches in breadth.

Charles Dixon gives the syllables “Kitty-coo-roo” as an imitation of the notes of this bird.

The local names known to me are those of Cuckee, Fachach, Lyne, Lyrie, Manx Lyre, Manx Petrel, Manx Puffin, Scraib, Scrapire, Shearwater Petrel, Skidden and Skrabe.

It has a blackish bill ; yellowish flesh-coloured legs and feet ; sooty-black crown, nape, and upper parts ; white underneath ; greyish-brown mottlings on neck sides.

Fifteen inches in length.

CXXI.—SHELDRAKE, COMMON (*Tadorna cornuta*).

THIS is one of the handsomest Ducks we possess and breeds on many parts of our coasts. Indeed, it is rare that the Sheldrake is found on inland waters, seeming to be a thorough coast bird. Its favourite haunts during the breeding season are sandy localities ; at other times it resorts to districts in which one would never think of looking for the bird during the summer.

It is a recluse and wary bird ; very sociable, and pairs

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for life. The flight is unlike that of others of its relatives in that it is not accompanied by such quick movements, being more "laboured."

This is not a diving Duck. Its food, which consists of crustacea, molluscs, marine vegetables, corn and vegetable seeds, is obtained by dabbling about the shore or in shallow water. It is, however, an excellent swimmer, gliding along with ease and elegance, and on land walks in a most graceful manner.

The Sheldrake arrives early at its breeding ground, but April, May and June is the all-important season.

For a nesting site it takes advantage of burrows made in the sand—rabbit burrows are often used—but it is not often the bird burrows for itself.

The nest consists of the leaves of sedge or grass, dry bents, a little moss, with a lining of beautiful soft down from the bird's own breast. Several nests are often found close to each other.

Eight or nine eggs complete a clutch, although as many as twelve to fourteen are sometimes laid. These are white, about two and a half inches long by nearly two inches in breadth.

It utters a harsh cry, but in the breeding season that of the Drake is a soft, tremulous, whistling note.

Many local names are on my list, and the most prominent are those of Bargander, Bargoose, Bay Duck, Burrow Duck, Pirenet, Scale Drake, Shell Duck, Skeeling Goose, Skelgoose, and Sly Goose.

The male has a knob at the base of the bill which is lacking in the female, and this and the beak are bright red; dark glossy-green on head and upper neck, with a collar of white, followed by a band of chestnut; white on wing-coverts; green speculum; black on scapulars, portion of secondaries, and primaries; white on rump, upper tail-coverts and tail-feathers, with black tips on the latter; dark brown on centre of breast and belly, white on remaining under parts; pink legs and feet.

The female is duller than her mate. Twenty-six inches in length.

Shoveler

CXXII.—SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*).

THIS fine Duck breeds in many localities in England, Scotland and Ireland, but no reliable data is forthcoming in regard to Wales. The Sheldrake, the Goosander and the Shoveler all have greenish heads, but the necks of the two first-named are also green, whilst that of the bird now receiving attention is green only on the upper portion of neck. The bill, however, of the Shoveler at once identifies it, being spatulate and lead colour, those of the two other birds mentioned above being bright and blood-red.

During the winter a large number of Shovelers visit our shores from Arctic regions, the arrival taking place during September, October and November, and the departure in the spring and early summer.

It is on inland fresh-water lakes and ponds that this bird is to be found; it loves these situations and appears to have no regard for the sea, although occasionally it will visit the coast in low-lying districts.

It is a shy, recluse bird, and it is with difficulty that the observer can follow its habits unless he is cautious and well concealed. Shallow water seems to appeal to the bird mostly, and here it may be seen dabbling in the mud for aquatic insects, small fish, molluscs, plants, etc., whilst it also partakes of frogs and grass.

Though many birds may perchance be found tenanting one sheet of water, they are mostly scattered and do not appear to be gregarious to any extent, although I have noticed it at Tring mixing up freely with other water fowl.

The Shoveler does not dive much, indeed, it has no need to, yet it is a good swimmer, and when well on the wing an excellent flier.

May is the breeding season, and the nest is placed on the ground, but is well hidden by a tuft of grass or some other clump of herbage; sedge or dry grass, with down from the bird's breast, constitute the nesting materials, and the eggs number from eight to twelve. These are white, tinged with a greenish-dun shade, about two inches long by one-and-a-half inches broad.

At most times it is a silent bird, but during the breeding season it utters a harsh quack, and a lower note when on the wing.

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The local names known to me are those of Blue-winged Shoveler, Blue-winged Stint, Broad Bill, Broad-billed Duck, Kertlutock, Scopper-bill, Shovel-bill, Spoonbill and White Spoonbill.

The broad-tipped bill is lead-colour; green on head and upper neck; white on lower neck and scapulars; dark brown on centre of back; pale blue on shoulders; white on greater wing-coverts; dark brown secondaries; speculum green; blackish rump, upper and under tail-coverts, and tail-feathers; rich chestnut breast and belly; dark brown freckled flanks on a paler ground; white vent; reddish-orange legs and feet. The female is brown with light and dark mottlings. During the summer, when the moult takes place, the male, like the Wild Duck, assumes the garb of the female.

Twenty inches in length.

CXXIII.—SHRIKE, RED-BACKED (*Lanius collurio*).

THIS bird seems to have a distinct liking for the telegraph wires as a perching and resting site, and it appears to delight in fitting unceasingly on to a railway bank, capturing some large insect and then back again on to the wires.

Let me endeavour to picture the scene. It is the month of May—that sweet month of blossom and garlanded hedgerows and fields—and the Red-backed Shrike has arrived amongst us once more. We take up our station on a little-frequented bridge which spans a branch line of one of our railways and it is really astonishing the bird notes and observations one may make from such a situation, especially if a good length of line be visible and high banks on either side. Those indispensable binoculars are required now; just glance down the wires and see if any bird is to be observed which to the naked eye is invisible! Our friend who is with us remarks that there is a peculiar bird about fifty yards down on the left, with very pronounced eye stripes, a sharply-hooked beak, and generally greyish and reddish-brown in plumage. There sits the bird, but before one has an opportunity of watching him nicely, he has disappeared on to the top of the hedge or on to the bank. He is soon back again,

Red-backed Shrike

however, and at last we spot him and identify him—the Red-backed Shrike. The sun shining directly on his soft and delicate plumage makes the bold bird a perfect picture, and we at last reluctantly leave him to continue his escapades unwatched and unseen by man. We would much like to stay and see for ourselves what quips and pranks he plays during the whole time it is light. At all times during the day he appears to be very busy indeed, and if he is a murderer—and kills very frequently for killing sake—many insects and caterpillars must be destroyed of which we can well afford to be rid. He also partakes of mice, shrews, small birds (young Pheasants have actually been taken by it), frogs, lizards, and humble bees.

He is best known in the country as the Butcher Bird, and a butcher he certainly is. The bird seems to take a delight in catching his victims and impaling them on thorns hard by his nest. I find the nest is usually placed in a hawthorn hedge and the thorns there abundant serve the bird well in his killing and hanging propensities. It seems an extraordinary fact that the Shrike should so often take life for the sake (apparently) of killing alone, and not for the purposes of food altogether, and a lot of work remains to be accomplished before we can hope to arrive at a correct understanding as to the reason for this trait in the bird's character.

It must not be thought, however, that all the victims transferred to the favourite thorn-bush are uneaten by the Shrike. He devours a good deal and casts up the indigestible portions in the form of pellets. But it is beyond all question that many more victims are slaughtered than are required to satisfy the bird's appetite—voracious though he undoubtedly is—yet after all it may be that we have in the Butcher Bird, if we did but know it, another helper in the balance of Nature.

At all times this is an interesting bird. It arrives in our country from Africa about the end of April or beginning of May, but during the summer of 1900 I found a nest and three eggs as early as May 29th.

The nesting season is from May onwards, and the situation chosen is generally a tree or hedgerow, a hawthorn hedge and a bramble bush being very favourite sites. The nest is somewhat large and is composed of grass

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stalks, roots and moss, lined with down or wool. Four to seven eggs are laid, and these are large, much larger in point of fact than those of the Cuckoo, a bird many times larger than the Shrike. They are bluish or greyish-white, spotted or blotched in the form of a circle at the larger end with light brown or ash.

Some writers state that this bird frequently utters its call-note, but I can only say that I have noted most particularly that it appears to me to be mostly a silent species. On occasions when I have been at the nest both birds have certainly uttered a scolding note in no half-hearted manner, but when kept in captivity it is said to acquire a song with much exactness, and with a full-toned musical voice!

Amongst the many local names known to me the following may be given:—Cheeter, Flasher, Flusher, Sack Baker, Murdering Pie, Nine Killer, and Whisky John. It is, however, best known as the Butcher Bird, as above stated.

It has a frontal band of black, and is also thus ornamented on the lores and ear-coverts; grey on crown and nape; has a chestnut-brown mantle; dark brown quills with rufous edgings; grey tail-coverts; tail-feathers black, with the exception of the bases which are white; rose-buff underneath; black bill and feet.

Seven inches in length.

CXXIV.—SISKIN (*Chrysometris spinus*).

THIS beautiful bird is by no means well known to those resident in the south of our island, at any rate not as a wild bird, for it is in the north that it breeds, although well-authenticated nests have been recorded from several southern countries.

As a cage bird it is far better known and is familiar to many, yet some people who have had it in their care as a pet have been astonished when told that it was a British breeding bird!

The Siskin seems to delight in districts where those health-giving pine forests predominate, and it is here that one must search for it with any hope of finding it. In its life and habits it resembles the dapper little Redpoll, and

Siskin

during autumn and winter the two birds associate together quite freely, often joined by one or more species of Tits.

At all times this is an interesting bird; it searches for food—which consists of small insects and seeds—almost unceasingly, and when a party is lighted upon, the scene is one not readily effaced from the memory. The lively creatures are continually twittering one to another, and this, together with the various attitudes which they assume, makes the sight and sound interesting and fascinating.

They are not shy birds, in man they seem conscious of protection, but great numbers are trapped and netted yearly.

To hear the melodious song of the bird in a lonely pine forest is a musical treat indeed, and uttered as it frequently is during flight, somewhat reminds one of the Tree Pipit. Though the song does not appear particularly varied, it is sweet and musical, and uttered as it often is whilst the bird is floating in the air with its beautiful wings fluttering and tail spread out, it has for the bird lover a peculiar and special attraction. The song period too is a somewhat lengthy one, extending right through the breeding season.

May and June is the breeding season, though some writers assert that it extends from April to July.

Fir trees and the like are generally selected as a nesting site, but the nest is said to have been found in this country in furze bushes not more than three feet from the ground. The nest is somewhat similar to that of the Greenfinch but smaller, and is made up of roots, moss, dried grass, small twigs of fir or heather, flick of rabbits, and sometimes feathers.

The four or five eggs are quite indistinguishable from those of the Goldfinch. The ground colour is bluish, some being spotted and others marked with rust colour, either in well-defined dark spots about the larger end, or cloudily dispersed over the whole surface.

The only local names known to me are Aberdevine and Barley Bird.

The Siskin has a black crown; behind the eye a wide streak of yellow; plumage has variegations of dusky, grey, and various shades of green; dusky wings, with a greenish-yellow bar (transverse), a black one above and a further one across the middle of the tertiaries; dusky tail, greenish-yellow at the base and edge of inner web.

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The female is not so bright as her mate and the black on the head is missing.

Four-and-a-half inches in length.

CXXV.—SKUA, COMMON (*Stercorarius catarrhactes*).

THIS interesting bird is one of those species which, owing to its rapid decrease in numbers, has been protected during the breeding season by private enterprise, and as a result thereof we are able to state that in the north it is increasing very satisfactorily.

The Common or Great Skua—the latter is probably the best name to employ—is a very daring bird, and anyone molesting it at its nesting haunts may have to suffer for such intrusion. The bird does not hesitate to swoop down at the intruder's head, and the blow dealt is often one not easily forgotten. My friend Mr Richard Kearton—who has had such excellent opportunities of studying these birds in the Shetland Isles—says that the blow is struck by the bird dropping both its feet, then landing out with the front of them on to the back of the head. No sooner has the blow been delivered than the angry bird soars above again and circles round ready for the next attack. Mr Kearton observes that they never strike the object of their resentment face on! He says he tried by wheeling round quickly to get them to do this by the calculation of time, but, however close, up they shot and sailed away with outstretched wings.

May and June is the breeding season, and the nest is placed on the ground on wild heaths in close proximity to mountains. Dry grass, a few pieces of ling and moss, go to make up the materials, and two eggs are laid, sometimes only one. It is said that the eggs vary in colour according to the locality. Some are dusky olive-brown, others with a much greener line, and they are blotched with darker brown, and a few spots of rust colour.

As to the food, they are sometimes called "Parasitic Gulls," because they subsist chiefly on the labours of others. Dead animal matter, fish, young birds, etc., constitute the dietary, and it is mostly obtained by robbery and pilfering.

The voice consists of a scream, and the local names of

Richardson's Skua

which I am cognisant, are as follows: Bonxie, Brown Gull, Cornish Gannet, Skua Gull, Port Egmont Heron, Tuliac and Teaser.

There are only six species of Skuas, so that we may compliment ourselves that we possess two of them in Britain as breeding birds; this is all the more reason why the efforts being put forward to encourage and protect them should be crowned with success.

It is mottled-brown above; white on shafts of quills and tail-feathers; rufous-brown underneath; black bill, legs and feet.

Twenty-five inches in length.

CXXVI.—SKUA, RICHARDSON'S (*Stercorarius crepidatus*).

LIKE the Common Skua, the species now under review is also piratical, only more so. Of its piratical habits no better description has been forthcoming than that given by Macgillivray, who wrote more than a century ago as follows:—"There comes gliding from afar, with swift and steady motion, a dark and resolute-looking bird, which, as it cleaves a path for itself among the white Terns, seems a messenger of death. His victim, light and agile, attempts to evade the aggressor. It mounts, descends, sweeps aside, glides off in a curve, turns, doubles, and shoots away, screaming incessantly the while. The Sea-hawk follows the frightened bird in all its motions, which its superior agility enables it to do with apparent ease. At length the Tern, finding escape hopeless, and perhaps terrified by the imminence of its danger, disgorges part of the contents of its gullet, probably with the view of lightening itself. The pursuer, with all his seeming ferocity, has no designs on the life of the poor Tern, and now his object is evident, for he plunges after the fallen fish, catching it in its descent, and presently flies off to attack another bird. In this way the marauder makes his rounds, exacting tribute from all whom he thinks capable of paying it and not sturdy enough to resist oppression."

The breeding season is towards the end of May and June, and the situation chosen as a nesting site is a small hollow or depression in the ground on open moors and moorlands, where it is open and where heather abounds.

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The nesting materials are similar to those of the last mentioned, with the exception that bents are used instead of ling.

The two eggs, which vary a great deal in shape, are greenish olive-brown, spotted with dark brown.

The food, and the manner in which it is obtained, resembles that of the Common Skua.

The call-note is a loud "keeow," "mee," and "mee-awk."

This bird possesses many local names, and among the most prominent are those of Allan, Arctic Bird, Arctic Gull, Badock, Black-toed Gull, Boatswain, Dirty-allen, Dung Bird, Dung-hunter, Faceddar, Feasar, Labbe, Long-tailed Labbe, Scoutie-allan, and Teaser.

Richardson's Skua is more numerous than the species which last received attention; it is gregarious and breeds in the far north of our island. There appear to be two varieties or forms of these birds, one being dark, and the other light. They freely mix together and breed, but, curious to relate, the progeny are either dark or light, not intermediate as might be supposed.

It has a dusky crown; white on cheek, neck, and under parts, with a yellow and brown tinge; dusky on remaining parts.

Twenty inches in length.

CXXVII.—SKYLARK (*Alauda arvensis*).

DURING my life I have probably listened to more Larks singing than any other British songster. For me, nevertheless, this sweet-voiced minstrel has a special charm, and I should never tire of listening to its joyous melodies. I may say at once it is my favourite British song-bird; it has an attraction and a fascination indescribable, thus I may be pardoned perhaps if in my notes respecting the bird's song I may appear over-zealous in the praise bestowed upon this scorner of the ground.

The song itself is of so beautiful a description that any attempt to write it down must surely fail. As the bird proceeds in its aerial flights it seems to increase in volume, sweetness and cadence. Right unto its final outburst, just previous to the final fall to the earth, the bird appears to gather music as it goes. Albeit, the song seems little varied, yet it can never become monotonous! Its sweet,

Skylark

chromatic lays and trills—call them what you will—uttered as they are during such prolonged and interesting song flights, always hold me entranced, and no sooner have I finished watching one particular bird alight safely on the ground, than I find myself eagerly scanning another bird just ascending, and I have often been entertained for a whole morning in Lark-land alone.

My notes with regard to this feathered musician are very frequent, for the reason that no matter when I am in or near my house I can hear half a dozen of these birds pouring out their joyful melodies. They are very plentiful indeed in this part of Hertfordshire, but, alas for the Nature lover ! the town is rapidly extending its area, and many an old green lane of my boyhood has been effaced beyond recognition. The expulsion of the Larks as neighbours of mine is, I am afraid, near at hand. A year or two will probably see them driven away from their present haunts, for by that time bricks and mortar will have superseded the corn-fields, the meadow lands and the other rural surroundings, but sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

The Lark's period of song is a lengthy one ; it sings practically eleven months out of the twelve, and is, in my opinion, the most continuous song-bird in the British Isles. It is never affected by the weather ; rain, snow, hail, heat, wind, all come alike to it, and it invariably sings with its head to the breeze.

How the Lark cleaves the air, especially when looked at through a pair of good glasses. Is it not interesting to watch it soaring upward ? Taking the glass from the eye, the observer can scarcely see the bird again with the naked eye, as it towers higher and higher until finally lost in the blue sky. Then it suddenly commences the descent, falling slowly, slowly, slowly, singing all the while, until finally it drops to the earth in a slanting direction.

He who can hear a Lark sing without straining eyes upwards to catch a sight of the blithe spirit, as Shelley so ably described the bird, must surely be one who "hath no music in himself." I should add that I have known the bird to sing for forty-five minutes at a stretch, soaring the whole time, and that I have seen it perch on trees, which is a contrary observation to that of most writers.

Besides being such an avine musician, the Skylark is also of much service in regard to the insects, and

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obnoxious seeds it devours. It cannot be gainsaid, however, that it does not do harm to shooting corn. The late Grant Allen writes:—"At the same time that our own birds thus scatter themselves in the cornfields, vast



NEST AND EGGS OF SKYLARK.

reinforcements of Continental Skylarks arrive for the winter. They seem to have been driven out of their own breeding-places by severe weather, and to come to England in search of food, which they find abundantly in our hospitable stubbles. Here they search for seeds, and, as they live in great part off grains of noxious weeds, like black

Skylark

bindweed, knotweed, corn-poppy and couch grass, I believe they are really most useful friends of the agricultural interest. They also devour a certain number of hibernating insects, and as these are for the most part egg-bearing females, laden with the broods of the succeeding year, they doubtless render good service in this way also. It is urged, on the other hand, that Larks commit depredations on the stacks and corn yards in severe weather, and that they do damage to autumn-sown crops and young spring plants. This is no doubt true ; but it is more than counterbalanced, not only in my opinion, but in that of many practical farmers, by the service they perform in destroying grubs and the seeds of noxious weeds. The farmer finds it no small advantage to have his stubble picked over, inch by inch, with ceaseless care, by a whole horde of eager and sharp-eyed assistants, who seldom pass by a single grain of the smaller plants which would otherwise eat up and absorb the nutriment he spreads upon the fields for the benefit of his corn crops."

It is an active, engaging bird, both in the air and upon the ground.

The nesting season is April to June, though I have found the nest as late as July. It is generally placed in a hollow amongst standing grass or other herbage, often in the footprint of a cow, or quite close to a meadow path.

Grass, with a lining of finer portions of the same, go to make up the nest. Four or five eggs are laid. These are whitish-grey, or yellowish, spotted and freckled, generally thickly, with darker grey, brown or dark yellow. Some I have seen nearly black and pointed, others nearly round and decidedly yellowish-brown.

I know of no local names for the bird, it is so universally known.

Above, the bird possesses three shades of brown, the darkest being along the shaft of each feather ; over the eye is a faint streak of white ; yellowish-white underneath with a brown tinge ; dark brown spots on throat and neck sides, forming a gorget just above the breast.

Seven inches and a quarter in length.

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CXXVIII.—SNIPE, COMMON (*Gallinago caelestis*).

THE peculiar "drumming" or "bleating" noise made by the Snipe has for some considerable time past been a mystery to bird students, as to whether the curious phenomenon was (1) a vocal sound, or (2) caused by the vibrating of the wings. Mr John Craig, of Beith, Ayrshire—writes me on this point as follows:—"On June 14, 1902, whilst Mr Barr, Mr Stewart, Mr M'Millan and myself were taking a walk, we heard the 'bleating' of a Snipe, and on listening attentively we also heard the 'chip, chip' which is produced by the bill, or rather the vocal organs, both of which sounds were produced at the same time, and these two distinct noises were repeated together several times. Mr Barr and myself have often listened to the 'bleating' of the Snipe, to hear if the bird ever produced the 'chip, chip' note at the same time, but we have never heard these two distinct sounds being produced together before. The four observers referred to think that the above evidence proves conclusively that the 'bleating' sound is produced by the wings. We think it can hardly be argued that the 'bleating' sound and the 'chip, chip' note can both be produced by the vocal organs at the same time. The former is never produced except when the bird is on the wing, and descending in a canted position, and the lower wing vibrates more rapidly than the upper one." These notes seem to settle once and for all this bird mystery, namely, that the "drumming" or "bleating" sound is caused by the vibration of the wings, and not by the vocal organs.

In the autumn and winter months the Snipe is a much commoner bird than during the summer. The reclamation of marsh lands and the like, forces the bird to resort to other suitable countries where there is more convenience than in our own little Island.

It probes dexterously and cleverly into the ground after worms and insects—which constitute its food—but during severe weather and when the ground is frozen the bird suffers very severely from having its food supply cut off.

The plumage harmonises so beautifully with the surroundings that one may often light upon the bird at quite

Common Snipe

close quarters before it attempts to move. This seems to imply that the bird wishes to avoid detection, and it is reasonable to suppose that many are almost stepped upon which are never seen by the observer. When disturbed, the Snipe takes to the air, proceeds upwards at a tremendous pace in a spiral sort of flight, uttering the while sharp, piercing cries.

One other noticeable and prominent feature in the life history of this bird must be mentioned, and that is the



NEST AND EGGS OF COMMON SNIPE.

extremely interesting pairing season. At this time the males carry out those wonderful flights in the air which those who have had the opportunity of studying this bird know so well. These aerial flights or exercises, or whatever they may be, take place throughout the day, but towards sunset they seem to increase. It is then that the performances are so captivating, because of their peculiarity and the charm of the evening hour, when there is a stillness creeping o'er the land, the effect of which the Nature lover knows so well and so much appreciates.

The nesting season is April or early May, and the few blades of herbage which go to make up the nest are placed

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on the ground in swampy localities, a slight depression is made, and the nest is usually hidden by some tuft of herbage. The four eggs are greenish-olive, blotched and spotted with two or three shades of brown, the deepest being very dark.

Amongst the local names I have collected are the following: Full Snipe, Heather-bleat, Hoarse Gowk, Mire Snipe, Snite, Summer Lamb and Whole Snipe.

Above, the plumage is mottled-black and chestnut-brown; white and dusky bars on flanks; white underneath.

Ten and a half inches in length.

CXXIX.—SPARROW, HEDGE (*Accentor modularis*).

WHY the name of Sparrow was ever conferred upon this delicate little Warbler—for such he is, and not a Finch like the far better-known House Sparrow—I do not know. Hedge Accentor or Hedge Warbler are two far better names to bestow upon the pretty Warbler who sings so early in the spring and so late in the year. He seems to be in the fullest song during February and March, and I listen daily to that cheery little song as the bird is perched on the naked hedgerow. His sober plumage so nearly matches the brownish twigs, that the little minstrel may often be searched for in vain, whereas he is quite near at hand. His song is a very delicate and feeble one, nevertheless extremely pleasant and musical. During the early part of the year the song is often mistaken for that of the Robin, but that of the Hedge Sparrow is much quicker in utterance, and not nearly so mellow and melancholy as in the case of the Redbreast. It is uttered with much accuracy and apparent consciousness.

The reason why the song of the bird now under consideration is so often mistaken for that of the well-known Robin, is because of the very peculiar notions some people have with regard to the songs of birds. Thus, many persons have alleged that the Robin is the only bird which sings during the winter! It only shows their complete ignorance on matters ornithological, for during almost any winter the following birds are in fairly continuous song:—Robin, Hedge Sparrow, Skylark, Song and Mistle Thrushes, and now and

Hedge Sparrow

then the Wren. How then can the Robin be said to be the only bird singing during our English winter? The fact is, the Hedge Sparrow is such a shy little musician that so soon as he observes anyone searching for him he dips down into the bottom of the hedgerow and presently a Robin—unmistakeable in his breast of red—comes hopping out into the roadway, and the musician is misidentified!

The Hedge Sparrow's actions when on the ground are more graceful than those of the House Sparrow. The former shuffles along shyly and in a cross direction, whilst the latter approaches boldly by means of constant and well-sustained hops. These characteristics are alone sufficient to identify one bird from the other, and they can readily be noted even in the garden. It is quite an education in bird movements to notice the various ways in which different species of birds approach food placed out for them, or indeed to observe their actions generally when moving upon the ground.

As regards the general life habits of the bird before us, a great deal cannot be written. It is for the most part one which seems to mind its own business, never interfering with any of its avian relatives; it always seems busy, engaged on some task in which it appears to take a very serious interest. When in its best plumage it is really a very beautiful bird in its steel-blue and brown, and one regrets that it is generally overlooked and so often despised because it is merely a Sparrow. There is no doubt, in my opinion, that it suffers to a great extent from molestation because of the almost universal hatred against the next bird on our list, the ubiquitous, cosmopolitan House Sparrow.

Its eggs are often taken and included in the hat-fulls taken periodically to the farmer, who pays the hobbledehoy so much per dozen for *Sparrow's* heads and eggs!

I always feel sorry for the Hedge Sparrow from the point of view that it is so often entrusted with the egg of the Cuckoo. It seems a pity—and yet it is the law of Nature, and a case of the survival of the fittest—that the inoffensive little Hedge Sparrow should have thrust upon its care an unruly young Cuckoo, a voracious, pugnacious and loquacious fledgling. The industrious foster-parents who have taken so much trouble to weave such a remarkable

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nest of moss, twigs, hair, dry grass and wool—the lining consisting of the latter—and then incubating with so much care and attention those delicate pale-blue eggs, have all their efforts frustrated when they find themselves laboured with the young Cuckoo. The eggs or young of the Hedge Sparrow are doomed, yet it really is an inexplicable fact that the foster-parents devote so much care



NEST AND EGGS OF HEDGE SPARROW.

and attention on the unruly youngster thrust upon them!

The breeding season is from March to June, some writers state as late as July, and the beautiful nest above described is placed in hedgerows, brambles, shrubs, trees, stacks, and the like. It has a great preference for shrubs and brambles, and the nest is often of very large dimensions for so small a bird. The four to six eggs are bright blue, though I have often found specimens dull blue and pale green.

House Sparrow

The Hedge Sparrow is mostly insectivorous in its diet—a far too generally overlooked fact. Small worms, insects, small seeds, and scraps during the winter, constitute the food.

It possesses many local names, and amongst the most prominent are the following: Hedge Accentor, Muffitie, Grosbeak, Blue Isaac, Cuddy, Dick Dunnock, Dunnock, Foolish Sparrow (what a ridiculous localisation), Hatcher, Hempie, Hedge Chanter, Hedge Creeper, Hedge Warbler, Shuffle-wing, Titling and Winter Fauvette.

Ash-colour crown with streaks of brown; bluish-grey on neck, sides, throat and breast; reddish-brown back and wings with dark brown streaks; buff-white breast and belly.

Five and a half inches in length.

CXXX.—SPARROW, HOUSE (*Passer domesticus*).

IN spite of all that has been said against the Sparrow, and the slaughter which is being carried on at the present time, he still exists pretty abundantly, and as far as I can foresee, is ever likely to. When all is said and done, supposing the harm does overbalance the good, we should miss the Sparrows, and there would, I believe, be a positive loss if he were extinguished from our midst.

If there is one good trait in his character which I hold in admiration, it is that he assiduously attends to his fledglings, and though I admit at times he appears to be of a very quarrelsome disposition, generally speaking he is a bird who takes things very cheerfully.

The “common” Sparrow is no fool; try all means possible—poisoned grain and otherwise—Sparrow-haters will, I think, have all their work cut out to exterminate him—he is much too artful for devices of any kind, no matter how cunning they may be.

It amuses me very much to see him as he hops about nimbly on the top of the wall, and with eyes and ears alert, watches until the path seems safe for him to commence his clever exploitations.

There is no doubt as to his being a scavenger—nothing appears to come amiss to him—and my experience teaches me that he prefers dabbling in and out of the ash-heap

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and around the rubbish-heap, to partaking of a repast of grain in the fields. True, in the vicinity of the farmyard he does appear to be thoroughly at home, but the back garden, with his nest in some water-spout, seems to be the situation in which he is most contented and happy.

I watch him too as he clings to some sunny wall, and dexterously searches in the cracks for any hiding insects, or, as he floats Flycatcher-like in the air after some wandering butterfly! It is not often that I have had the good fortune to catch him engaging in these operations, but I have seen it times enough to convince me that an insectivorous diet of this description pleases him greatly and whets his appetite.

Moreover, in the allotment gardens I have watched half a dozen "common" Sparrows among a row of cabbages, devouring the devastating caterpillars wholesale.

I cannot give the space to this Sparrow controversy which I should like, much less can I hope to convince the Sparrow-hater of his error. I must give a few quotations, however, from other observers, and first and foremost is an extract from the report of the Committee of the House of Commons, on the Wild Birds Protection Act, which expressly states:—

"The Sparrow undoubtedly does harm in gardens, he does a certain amount of harm; but if he does harm for three months of the year he does good for the other nine months, which counterbalances it."

From *Ornithology and Agriculture* we learn that "in Maine and Auxerre, some five-and-thirty years ago, Sparrows were exterminated, with the result that almost every green leaf in the following season was destroyed by caterpillars."

Professor Alfred Newton and Hans Gadow (*Dictionary of Birds*) say of him:—"It is freely admitted that the damage done to growing crops is often enormous, but as yet the service frequently rendered by the destruction of insect pests cannot be calculated."

From *British Birds*, by Mr W. H. Hudson:—"The young are fed on caterpillars; and the adults are also partly insectivorous during the summer months, but in autumn and winter, grain, seeds and buds are chiefly eaten."

House Sparrow

"With regard to the House Sparrow, does he do good or harm, do you think? He does a great deal of good; he never feeds his young on corn at all; you see him in all the paths in the cornfield, he is not at the corn; he feeds his young on insects. I never knew him feed his young on milky grain. I have killed thousands of them and examined them. What have you found in their stomachs? Generally grubs, or those little beetles which run across the footpaths." (Swaysland, *ib.*, par. 2294, etc.)

"What is your opinion about the Sparrow? My opinion is that the good he does far counterbalances the evil. The time of year when the Sparrow commits the most destruction is when the milky grain is in the plant." (Cordeaux, *ib.*, par. 2419.)

From Report by the late Miss Ormerod for 1891, pp. 112, 135, 139 and 147, in reference to ravages of the Diamond-backed moth:—"The common House Sparrow has done a lot of good in picking off the grubs."—J. P. Darrell. "Crows and Sparrows were the birds that devoured the pests chiefly."—J. Gibson. "I have no doubt that the Sparrow has assisted largely in mitigating the evil."—A. Balsillie. "Sparrows very plentiful and all been most industrious."—J. Swan. *Note*:—These four gentlemen are all *farmers*.

"Even Sparrows are slain by hundreds in some benighted parishes under the auspices of the local Sparrow club, or the magnates of the vestry meeting. Doubtless such short-sighted wisdom will bring its own punishment. Increased insect ravages may compel the next generation to atone their fathers' misdeeds by importing the very birds which the latter so ruthlessly destroyed."—(Rev. M. G. Watkins, *In the Country*, p. 178).

F. V. Archibald in *Agricultural Zoology*, pages 138 and 397:—"That Sparrows do an immense amount of harm is only too well known, but they are not accountable for the damage done to young peas and beans that is usually attributed to them. When the edges of the leaves of our peas are eaten out in notches it is generally said to be due to this cosmopolitan bird; but if we carefully and quietly watch a row showing these symptoms, we will observe, sitting on the edge of the leaf, a clay-coloured beetle; this insect is one of the pea and bee weevils, either *Sitones lineatus* or *S. crinitus*. . . . They devour many insect

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pests which we could never get at. The writer at one time condemned these birds before some farmers and gardeners in Surrey, when he was promptly brought to order by more than one, who pointed out their great benefit in destroying insects. Certainly they can be seen clearing off the 'colliers' on beans and the blight on corn, and they feed ravenously on small larvæ on fruit trees. Water-cress growers say their chief remedy for the 'caddis-worms' is to let the beds run dry, when the Sparrows soon clear them off. Put to this the fact that they devour large quantities of weed-seeds, and then we may not think so ill of this cosmopolitan bird. We know not what might happen if we eradicate them—an almost impossible act to perform, as they are immensely prolific, having often three broods in the year."

Amongst other things of which the House Sparrow stands charged—in my opinion not convicted—is that it does much harm to crocus blooms. The following from the *Fruit Grower* (written by the editor thereof) is interesting reading:—"We have grown crocus for a number of years, and although we feed the Sparrows every day, and they nest just above one of our crocus beds, which are now in bloom, they never touch one of them, and we have never known them to. Possibly, by providing, as we do, water for them in a shallow dish, and feeding them with crumbs, they are prevented from doing any harm, although we have yet to learn that they do pull the crocus blooms to pieces out of sheer wantonness. We do not believe they do; at least, we know they do not touch ours."

I must now bring to a close my observations and quotations on the food of this bird by stating that it does do considerable injury to crops without a doubt; that it will attack rows of peas when just above the ground, but which in my garden have invariably given a good and abundant crop thereafter; that it does drive the gentle Martin away from under the eaves and thus exists in some cases to the detriment of an entirely insectivorous bird; that at certain times of the year it is a nuisance, and that at the present time there are far too many Sparrows. But I advocate, and that very strongly, that as a scavenger, and as a destroyer of larvæ and insect pests, his crimes are too exaggerated, and when we also consider that being a Finch he also partakes very largely of the

House Sparrow

seeds of various obnoxious weeds, there surely is evidence enough that the good out-balances the harm. The reduction in the number of Sparrows advocated in certain channels would have positively amazing results, I believe, in the direction of the many other useful species which would suffer at the Sparrow's expense. One must bear in mind, in any advocacy as to reducing the present abnormal numbers of Sparrows, the ignorance which still prevails in the country as to what a Sparrow really is. Almost every brown bird anywhere near the size of the ubiquitous bird under review is at once designated "Sparrow." The Hedge Sparrow, many of the Summer Warblers, the Corn Bunting, the Tree Sparrow and many other species are often killed, because of the belief that they are Sparrows. The following incident sent to me by a well-known naturalist will show:—"A few Sundays ago I was taking a walk with my youngest son and came across a nest of Nightingales that a ruffianly boy had just trampled under foot. 'What did you do that for?' we asked indignantly; 'do you know that you have killed five Nightingales?' 'Yah! ge 'long!' replied the urchin, 'they're Spadgers, an' they ruin my father's corn, he read it in a book, he did, an' I'd reckon he knows: mind yer own b'sness, yah!' and it was impossible to convince the little brute that he had committed a base and most unjustifiable murder. In the bucolic estimation every bird is a 'Spadger,' and must be killed when possible; soon there will not be any birds left to kill. I have no doubt that, viewed from the standpoint of Mr ——'s back garden, the Sparrow is somewhat of a nuisance, witness those 'two rows—two long rows of peas,' and that currant bush! but I would venture to suggest that however annoying these losses may be, they do not justify the wholesale extermination of the birds. I would venture to suggest that a back garden is not the world, and that outside it are other and more important interests that call as loudly for the preservation of the birds as some people do for their extermination. People, as a rule, are much more ready to listen to those who appeal to their cupidity than to those who try to rouse the better instincts of their nature and make them look beyond themselves to the larger interests outside, hence the destructive teaching, sad to say, finds readier acceptance with the multitude

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than the more enlightened counsels of others who are of a different way of thinking."

It is said that this bird flies at the rate of seventy-two miles an hour. Of his cheek, pluck and personal courage I need hardly write. The Sparrow's friendliness for man and his heroism in spite of the persecution meted out against him are positively amazing. Mr John Ruskin remarked on one occasion as to the heroism of a fly coming back to the same hand which had just brushed it away. He said it was as if a man, sitting on a seven-acre field, felt it turned over by an earthquake, yet calmly returned the next moment to the same resting-spot.

The House Sparrow breeds from March to August, and I have often seen them building throughout the winter. Surely there never was a more cosmopolitan bird in the history of man! The nest is placed anywhere; houses, out-buildings, hedges, trees, etc., all come alike to him. He often builds in the bottom part of a Rook's nest, the Rooks paying no attention whatever to the cheeky occupants below.

The nest is made up of a mass of hay, straw, feathers, scraps of paper, wool, string, roots of grasses and similar components. It is a large structure, and it is often some time before the eggs can be located. The five or six eggs vary in colouring in a most bewildering manner. There must be hundreds of varieties. I personally have over fifty distinct varieties, some being very much like those of the Pied Wagtail, Blackcap, Swift, Swallow, Tree Pipit and Tree Sparrow. A general description might be as follows:—dirty white, with a bluish or greenish tinge, spotted, speckled, streaked, blotched, and dashed, or one or the other, with either dark brown, greyish-brown, or dull chestnut-brown.

The Sparrow's chirp is well known, and I have only on one occasion heard one vocalise to such perfection as to be called singing. This was at the Zoological Gardens in April 1900, when I heard one of the cheeky young beggars who flit in and out amongst the animals there without the slightest fear, singing two or three notes of a clear and very musical description. He is known in various districts as the Brown Sparrow, Domestic Sparrow, Spring and Spagger.

It has black lores; over each eye is a narrow streak of

Tree Sparrow

white ; ash-grey on crown, nape and lower part of back ; chestnut near the ear-coverts ; chestnut-brown back with black streaks ; brown wings, with bars of white on the middle coverts ; dull brown tail ; black throat and breast ; white cheeks and neck sides ; dull white on belly.

The female has the black on the throat lacking and the upper parts striated dusky brown.

Six inches in length.

CXXXI.—SPARROW, TREE (*Passer montanus*).

It is not to be wondered at that this bird is often confounded with the last named, when one considers that both species build in trees, barns and out-houses, notwithstanding the present bird's name of *Tree Sparrow*.

The chief points of difference between the two birds are, shortly stated, as follows :—

The Tree Sparrow most frequently places its nest in the holes of trees such as pollards, and more especially when they have gone to decay. Also in cracks and crevices in rocks, quarries, etc.

The Tree Sparrow may be identified by the chestnut-coloured head, and black-and-white patches at side, also the double bar on the wing.

It is much shyer than the House Sparrow, and resorts to woods, copses and the like to a much greater extent.

It is more engaging and lively ; the voice is shriller and of more variation than that of *Passer domesticus*.

The Tree Sparrow breeds from April onwards, and the nest is made up of hay and straw, with a lining of hair, wool, feathers and other tit-bits.

The four or five eggs do not vary nearly so much as those of its despised relative. They are usually dirty-white or very light-grey, well dashed and spotted with dark greyish or amber-brown. Some writers compare them to those of the Meadow Pipit.

This Sparrow undoubtedly does a great deal of good in the destruction of the seeds of weeds and grass, insects,

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etc., the former during the winter, the latter in the summer.

The only local names known to me are those of French Sparrow and Mountain Sparrow.

It is not nearly so numerous as the House Sparrow ; in Wales and Ireland it is rare ; in England and Scotland it is not at all common.

Chestnut-brown crown and back of head ; black lore, ear-coverts and throat ; white collar almost all round the neck ; upper parts as the House Sparrow ; two transverse white bars on wing.

Five and a half inches in length.

CXXXII.—STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

VIEWED as he is perched on a house or tree-top—the latter for preference—with the sun directly shining on his metallic plumage, the Starling looks a picture in his green-and-violet reflections. To most people he is a black bird, but to the cultivated eye of the ornithologist he is much more. During the winter—when these birds are so gregarious—there appear to be many of a light colour, so light that I have nearly been mistaken in the bird under observation. Of course, the lighter-coloured bird is the female, but for all that I cannot think that there is such a preponderance of females during the winter months, and it seems to me that this lighter-coloured bird must be a variety of this interesting member of the Crow family, or young birds of the year.

The Starling is well known in the country, and seems to be increasing by leaps and bounds. Whether as a useful ridder of obnoxious grubs and refuse, or as a songster, the Starling has long been a bird which is held in high esteem by the writer. As regards the first named ; it cannot be gainsaid that during the fruit season it will pilfer in the orchard and garden, but the myriads of grubs it destroys is inestimable. It also does a deal of good as a scavenger, delighting in dabbling on a refuse heap.

I cull the following interesting lines from a London paper :—“ When one sees the enormous flocks of Starlings which in winter and spring roost together, one cannot but wonder where they all get their food from. They live mainly

Starling

on grubs, and will often clear a tree of caterpillars, and they move from place to place and so hunt over a very wide area, sometimes even going to the seashore for their food. But though they are troublesome to the thatch when nesting, they are, year in and year out, a real help to the farmer. They rid the pasture of grubs and insects, and sheep of ticks, and the trees of caterpillars, and the number of these noxious things which they get rid of surpasses belief; they can only be reckoned by millions. The more natural history is studied the more does it appear that any large or prolonged attempt to disturb the balance of Nature results in almost immediate disaster. The insects are omnipresent, and in one form or another are a deadly scourge to vegetation and fruit. The birds can deal with the insects, taking them in all their various forms and in quantities which would appear incredible. Do away with the birds because they occasionally damage the fruit while looking for the grubs, etc., and you at once let in a plague far more sweeping and difficult to get rid of than you had before. Take it all round, the old saw, 'Live and let live,' is a wise one."

Regarding its vocal powers, the manner of utterance is, to my mind, more prominent and appealing than the song itself. Perched on some neighbouring house-top—those with gables it is very partial to as a nesting haunt—he seems to attract by every possible means the attention of the passer-by. His throat puffs out, his bill chatters away at an enormous rate, and the bird seems so proud of his vocal achievements that it is positively amusing to watch it at its various song-stretches. Of the song little can be said. In the main it is a curious sort of chatter, with one long-drawn-out note uttered ever and anon, and now and then a faint kind of warble. Some individuals I have heard singing quite pleasantly, but, taken generally, it cannot be said to aspire as a songster.

When kept in a domestic state it should be put on record that it is a wonderful mimic. One I knew of, imitated in the most perfect manner possible the plaintive cry of the Cuckoo, the quack of a Duck, the laugh of a Woodpecker, the Jackdaw, and other notes too extraordinary to distinguish. In uttering any of these notes the bird resorted to the well-known chatter just previously mentioned, as if to prepare himself for the mimicry.

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Respecting the general life and habits of this bird, he always seems occupied, and often throughout the year I observe them in small companies, though during the winter one may see them in thousands.

One of the pleasantest of rural scenes is to observe a Starling on a sheep's back picking out the ticks, and these birds and Meadow Pipits are often to be seen in the vicinity of a sheepfold, especially in early spring.

Starlings, too, I have seen swooping in the air at a moth



YOUNG STARLINGS.

or some other insect, and hovering Hawk-like so as to quite deceive the observer as to the identity of the bird under observation.

It is a nervous bird, but extremely hardy, and it is only during severe weather that it approaches within easy distance of observation, that is to say on the ground.

It is often to be seen in company with its relatives—the Rooks and Jackdaws—on grass and ploughed lands searching for grubs and worms, and when thus engaged presents a very interesting and striking appearance, as it runs and waddles along in its own peculiar manner. When one bird has unearthed a tit-bit, those around all

Stonechat

rush, tumble, scream and quarrel until it is gobbled down.

The Starling is an early breeder and eggs are often laid as soon as March. From April to June is, however, mostly the period which covers the breeding season.

The nest is placed in holes of trees or walls, under the eaves of houses, stacks, in the holes bored out in the sand by the industrious little Sand Martin, and, it is said, in rats holes and under stones on the beach. It is by no means tidy, and consists of straw, grass, sticks, feathers, twine, paper, wool, rags, moss and other paraphernalia. The four to six eggs are pale blue, a trifle pointed at one end, one of the simplest and yet most beautiful eggs laid by any British bird.

The local and provincial names on my list include the following: Brown Starling, Chepster, Sheep Stare, Sheep Starling, Solitary Thrush (young), Speckled Stare, and Star Thrush (young).

The plumage generally is black with green and purple reflections, pale buff tips on the upper feathers; white edges to under tail-coverts; yellow beak; flesh-coloured feet with a brownish tinge.

The female is spotted on the under parts as well as above, whilst the young are ash-brown and unspotted.

Eight and a half inches in length.

CXXXIII.—STONECHAT (*Pratincola rubicola*).

If anyone were to ask me which bird is one of the prettiest in the British Isles—that is of the smaller species—I should unhesitatingly give my vote in favour of the Stonechat.

Lighting suddenly upon the bird along some sunlit hedgerow or on a furze common—a very favourite haunt—the observer wonders for a moment as to the identity of the species before him, so beautifully contrasting are the colours of its plumage.

It almost invariably perches and flits on to the topmost twigs of the hedgerow or furze bush, and when seen in these positions the black of the head, the chestnut-red breast, the white neck sides and rump, are conspicuously and pleasingly displayed.

It is a most restless bird, and it is difficult to get the

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field-glasses upon it for any length of time. One only catches a momentary glance as it now drops to the ground, now hawks Flycatcher-like in the air, now flits off to another position some little distance off.

For man this bird appears to have a distinct hatred; in his presence he becomes very restless and ill at ease, uttering the while a complaining sort of note. So, too, during the nesting season; at that time the bird seems in the greatest distress, and it is really unenjoyable to be in its presence.

With us it is a resident bird, although many persons are of opinion that, like the Whinchat and the Wheatear, it is a summer visitor only. This erroneous impression has doubtless arisen owing to the fact that many of these birds leave this country in the autumn, and that during the winter the bird appears to affect untenanted localities where it can remain undisturbed until early spring.

It is called Stonechat because of the notes above referred to being so like unto the striking together of a couple of pebbles, but the name is misleading, inasmuch as the bird does not resort to stony places but rather to commons and the like.

The nest is built towards the end of April or the beginning of May, and is generally well hidden on or close to the ground. It is often placed at the bottom of some bush and is composed of dry grass and moss. A nice lining is made of hair and feathers, and occasionally fine grass. It is a very neat nest.

From four to six eggs are laid, sometimes as many as seven. These are pale bluish-green with a very faint red circlet of spots at the larger end. I have seen them entirely unspotted.

It is insectivorous.

The male utters a slight though sweet and pleasant song, which is given both when the bird is perched and hovering.

Many local names are on my list, including the following: Black Cap, Black-headed Buschat, Blethering Tam, Blacky-top, Moor Tite, Moor Titling, Stonechack, Stonechaker, Stonechatter, Stoneclink, Stonesmick, and Stonesmith.

Black head, throat, beak and feet; white neck sides, tertial wing-coverts and rump; bright chestnut-red breast,

Swallow

inclining to whitish on the belly; feathers of the back, wings and tail, black, with edges of reddish-brown.

The female has the head and upper parts dusky-brown, with yellowish-red edges to the feathers; black throat, with small spots of white and reddish; there is not so much white in the wings and tail, whilst the breast is a dull red.

Five-and-a-quarter inches in length.

CXXXIV.—SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*).

How many people are there living in the country who know a Swallow from a Martin? To most people the Swallow, the Martin and the Swift are all Swallows, and it is inexplicable that many who profess to study and know birds should not be able to identify a Swallow when they see or hear it.

But who, may I ask, once knowing the bird, can possibly mistake it? Its graceful flight, as it skims across the meadows, its very pleasant song, its much longer and less catapult-forked tail, the red throat, the less white breast, the fact that its nest is built in chimneys, barns, outhouses, shafts, underneath bridges, etc., instead of under the eaves of houses as in the case of the House Martin, all aid to identify the Swallow as the Swallow, and as being quite distinct from the House and Sand Martins and the screeching Swift. Indeed to the last named it is in no way related.

To me the Swallow is very dear; I know and love its song; I delight in watching it skim over the surface of the village pool, over the verdant meadows of this country of ours, or gyrating high up in the air; it turns and twists more often than the Martin, and seems to have a much greater control over its flight powers. It is a sight not to be forgotten, to watch the bird swooping over some large meadow, now close to the golden crowfoots, now gradually curving upwards and poising for a moment in the air and twittering the while, then on again right away to the far side of the field in which our observations are taking place.

It usually arrives from India and Ethiopia—where the

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winter is spent—about the middle of April, but the following early occurrences during 1901 are interesting:—

Date.	Locality.	County.
March 31.	Fordingbridge.	Hampshire.
April 2.	Tiverton.	Devonshire.
„ 2.	Swanage.	Dorsetshire.
„ 2.	Dudley.	Worcestershire.
„ 4.	Oxford.	Oxfordshire.
„ 5.	Braunton.	Devonshire.
„ 6.	Topsham.	Devonshire.
„ 6.	Near Bristol.	Gloucestershire.
„ 7.	St Albans.	Hertfordshire.
„ 7.	Devizes.	Wiltshire.

I have a good many records, too, of its appearance on the 8th, but the greater majority of my correspondents give about the 15th to the 18th of April as the date first seen.

As a destroyer of myriads of insects—which alone constitute its food—the Swallow is a boon to mankind, and it is to be sincerely hoped that every protection will be afforded the bird, and also the House Martin, so that their numbers may increase. The number of insects destroyed is simply incalculable, but some idea may perhaps be gauged, when I state that during the summer the bird is on the wing for fully sixteen hours, and for the greater part of the time it is making havoc amongst the millions of insects which infest the air. It possesses a larger mouth, in comparison to its size, than that of any other British bird.

Undoubtedly it is one of our most favourite summer visitors; almost as much so as the Nightingale, inasmuch as he gladdens our sense of seeing as much as the other does our sense of hearing. He is one of the joyous prophets of the year, the welcome harbinger of the best season; he lives a busy life amidst the loveliest forms of Nature, and winter is unknown to him.

The song is a pleasing twitter, little varied, but decidedly pleasant, and is uttered both whilst the bird is on the wing and perching. It has a shrill alarm or call-note very similar indeed to that of the Pied Wagtail. Many people are unaware that the Swallow perches on trees, but it is

Swallow

quite a common occurrence and, as stated above, it often sings while sitting thus.

The sight of thousands of these birds congregating in the autumn preparatory to bidding us farewell until another springtime is one never to be forgotten. The extraordinary migratory instinct, and the bird's unfailing habit of returning to the same spot year by year, are two of those mysteries in the bird world which seem too wonderful for us to comprehend and understand.



YOUNG SWALLOWS IN NEST.

Nesting operations commence soon after April, and I have frequently known young in the nest as late as September. The situations chosen as a nesting site have already been mentioned. The nest is made of mud, hay and straw, with a lining of feathers, and the way in which it is often attached to the sides of out-houses, walls and the like is a veritable triumph in the way of avine plastering.

The four to six eggs are white, spotted and blotched with light and dark brown. The size seems to vary a great deal, some being round, others quite elongated.

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The local names include those of Barn Swallow, Chimney Swallow, House Swallow, Red-Fronted Swallow and Window Swallow.

The bird has a chestnut-brown forehead and throat; black on upper parts and neck-sides with violet reflections; dull reddish-white underneath. Long, forked tail.

The female has not such a red forehead, and has less black on the breast; under parts white, and the outer tail-feathers are shorter than in the male.

Seven and a half inches in length.

CXXXV.—SWAN, MUTE (*Cygnus olor*).

THIS is the only Swan which breeds in the British Islands at the present time, and being mostly found in a semi-domestic state, we really cannot be said to have a perfectly wild Swan nesting with us. Undoubtedly there may be many of these birds almost wild, but there are many semi-domesticated, and it is a difficult matter to tell the difference between the two; but if the nesting and breeding habits of the tame Swan be recorded, they also serve for the wild Swan, as they have been proved to be identical.

The Mute Swan was brought over to England from Cyprus in the reign of Richard I.

On our large sheets of water, surely there is no more elegant ornament than the beautiful Swan now receiving our attention. Their snowy-white plumes and graceful attitudes are known to almost everyone, and it is not necessary for me to enlarge.

These birds, in my experience, resent interference very much indeed, and it is stated that a blow from their wings is something to be remembered. Mr E. Kay Robinson tells me, however, that this latter statement when tested is found to be untrue. Anyone venturing too near to the birds—especially during the breeding season—may have cause to repent such intrusion, yet a friend of mine took an egg from under a sitting bird without the least resentment on her part!

What one hears of as the Wild Swan is the Whooper Swan, which visits us during the winter, but does not breed

Mute Swan

with us. Bewick's Swan, too, visits us occasionally in severe winters.

The breeding season is April and May, sometimes as early as March. The nest is generally placed near the edge of water, usually a lake or on some island. It often assumes very bulky proportions, and is made up of aquatic plants, such as rushes and reeds.

The six to seven eggs are rough in texture, almost equally pointed at either end, and are generally greenish-white in colour. It is the largest egg laid by any British breeding bird. It is stated that as many as ten to twelve eggs complete a clutch in Norfolk, where the great extent of water and unlimited supply of natural food renders the birds very prolific.

The food consists of aquatic plants, and the bird accidentally swallows perhaps a few molluscs and insects.

In a wild state it has, during the pairing season, a loud trumpet-like note, but when found in a semi-domestic state, it always strikes me as a very silent bird.

That good sportsman and eminent naturalist, Sir Herbert Maxwell, writes as under in *Fowls of the Air*:—"At the beginning of the great frost of February 1895 I was fishing in Thurso. A brace of beautiful wild Swans came up the river and offered to light on the pool beside which I was standing, but on seeing me they flew on. My gillie said he thought they would settle at a place higher up the river, and urged me to get a gun—for I would get a fine chance at them. I turned and said, 'Do you know that if I were to get twenty guineas for every Swan I bagged I never would fire at one of them?' He looked half amused, half incredulous; but many sportsmen will understand my feelings. I don't want to make myself out better than I am. I was bred a sportsman, and though I shoot no longer I would be ashamed to compound for sins I am inclined for (fishing, for instance) by damning those I have no mind for; and, in my opinion, the Society for the Protection of Birds has acted wisely in refraining from interference with legitimate sport."

The only local names on my list are those of Common Swan, Cygnet (young), Domestic and Tame Swan.

The bill is reddish-orange; the nostrils, lores, nail and basal tubercle black; pure white plumage; black legs and feet.

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Male a trifle larger than the female. Sixty inches in length : about thirty pounds in weight.

CXXXVI.—SWIFT (*Cypselus apus*).

THE Swift is an extraordinary bird. First, let me dispel the very general notion that it belongs to the Swallow tribe. The nearest group of Aves to which it is akin, is the Humming Birds, a fact which will doubtless cause surprise to a good many readers.

I said the Swift is an extraordinary bird, and I will illustrate my meaning. It is almost the latest summer visitor to our shores—it is the earliest to depart. It lives practically in the air, is very rarely seen on the ground, and very little is known about its life and habits. When once on the ground it experiences difficulty in rising again, owing to the shortness of the tarsi, but it is erroneous to suppose that it is absolutely impossible for the bird to do so when in that position. It has little need to come to the ground, its life is spent either round about the nesting site or in the air.

And what a sight to behold a score of Swifts madly careering through the air, round and round, screaming the while, just after sunset. It is one of the most peculiar phenomenon in the whole realm of Nature, and as yet remains practically unexplained. It is said, too, that these birds, just before dusk, soar higher and higher until finally lost in the clouds, where they stay until the morning. This statement is not, I believe, in any way substantiated, and I am much inclined to doubt it. I have never assumed that the birds stopped up there until the break of day, but naturally supposed they came down again at or before nightfall.

Is there anyone residing in the country who has not watched these birds flying at a break-neck speed, round and round, uttering the while the by no means unmusical screams which are invariably uttered during such operations, as the birds and the sounds are now near, now far away? It is one of the charms of the summer evening in rural Britain.

The Swift spends the winter in Africa, and reaches us

Common Teal

from that country generally during the first week in May. Some early records for 1901 reached me as under :—

Date.	Locality.	County.
April 21.	Rathgan.	Dublin (Ireland).
„ 21.	Winchester.	Hampshire.
„ 24.	Andover.	Hampshire.
„ 24.	Halesworth.	Suffolk.
„ 26.	Southampton.	Hampshire.

Arriving in May, the Swift loses no time in building a nest and rearing its young. The breeding season is between the end of May and the first weeks in June.

The nest is placed under the eaves of houses and other buildings, in steeples, ruins, trees, pits, and rocky cliffs. Hay, feathers, and other similar materials are used, and these are glued together by saliva, and a writer in the *Zoologist* mentions that he has found, on many occasions, fresh flowers, with long stalks, of the buttercup (*crowfoot*).

The two or three white eggs are rather large for the size of the bird, being 1·0 by ·66 inches.

Insects constitute the food, and the Swift is one of the most beneficial birds which gladdens us with its presence during the summer.

The voice seems to be mute other than when the birds are flying as described above.

Many local names are known to me, the chief among them being those of Black Martin, Cran, Devilng, Devil Swallow, Jack Squealer, Martin Du, Screamer, Screech, Screech Martin, Skir Devil, Skeer Devil, Squealer, Swift Swallow and Black Swallow.

General plumage, sooty-brown; greyish-white chin; tarsi feathered; shiny black bill, feet and claws.

Seven and a half inches in length.

CXXXVII.—TEAL, COMMON (*Querquedula crecca*).

It is stated that of all our Wild Fowl this bird is the most delicate eating. Consequently we find that it was often served up at the lordly banquets of olden time. It is also one of the most beautiful in regard to the luxury

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of its dress, and is the smallest Duck which regularly breeds in the British Isles.

The Teal is very docile and tame, and the male bird keeps his mate company during the breeding season much longer than most Ducks, and does not leave her until the young ones are fairly well grown.

It breeds in May, choosing as a nesting site a marshy and swampy locality. The nest is similar to that of the Mute Swan, but is lined with the bird's own down, and sometimes feathers. It is artfully concealed amongst bushes, rushes and other herbage.

The eggs usually number between eight and ten, but as many as a dozen have often been recorded. They are buff-white in colour, occasionally tinged with faint green; $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches long, and a little over $1\frac{1}{4}$ in breadth.

The food consists of aquatic plants, grain, and insects.

A short, sharp quack is its call-note, and during the pairing season the male gives vent to a low, jarring note. The only local name known to me is that of Summer Teal.

It has a blackish bill; chestnut crown, cheeks, neck and throat; at the back of the eye and round the same there is a glossy-green patch with buff margins; black and white upper parts; black, green and purple speculum, with yellowish-white tips; black rump and tail-coverts; brown tail-feathers; black spots on a buff ground on front of neck; white breast and belly; brownish-grey legs and feet.

The female is mottled-brown, and there is not nearly so much purple on the speculum, if at all.

The drake assumes the dress of the female in July and keeps it until the following October.

Fourteen and a half inches in length.

CXXXVIII.—TERN, ARCTIC (*Sterna macrura*).

ALTHOUGH so little known to many people, we have five members of this family of Aves breeding in our country. Most people, who do know these birds, call them Sea Swallows, and, unlike the majority of local and provincial names, this one is by no means far-fetched, so Swallow-like are they.

Arctic Tern

The present species is like a feathered jewel as it is watched in its black and white plumage flying gracefully over the crest of the waves. The flight is unlike that of any other bird with which I am acquainted; it is so buoyant, unlaboured, graceful and captivating. It may be seen suspended almost motionless in the air, reminding one of a Humming Bird hovering over a flower, or of some huge butterfly. Only those who have had the good fortune to watch the Tern in its native habitat can form any idea of the fascination which a careful watching of its life and habits holds for the lover of birds.

When engaged in fishing and feeding, these birds take no notice of the observer and continually fly close to him quite undisturbed. It is a rare treat to watch them in the act of catching their prey, and a sight not easily effaced from the memory. There are the birds in front of us, flying gracefully up and down, now curving, now twisting, now almost floating in the air until the victim is spotted, then the wings are brought close together and the bird dashes down on its prey like a bolt from the blue, reappearing in an instant with a fish between its mandibles.

The Arctic Tern rarely breeds south of Northumberland, and when seen on the wing with the Common Tern identification is practically impossible. During the last year or two this bird has greatly increased in Ireland as a breeding species. They nest in colonies, and the breeding season is May and June. The eggs are placed in the shingle or sand, and it is rare that any attempt is made at building a nest. When such is the case a few dried grasses or small pieces of seaweed are used, but it is very probable that the eggs are placed under or near these and the materials are not brought to the site by the birds.

The two or three eggs are olive, buff, greyish-brown, or stone in ground colour, the spots and blotches are blackish-brown and grey; sometimes these are many and at others very few. It is a most varying egg, and it is with much difficulty that they can be located, so wonderfully do they match the surroundings in which they are placed.

Small fish constitute the food.

The voice is a powerful scream, and the only local names known to me are those of Pease Crow and White Daw.

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The bill is blood-red ; legs and feet coral red ; black head and nape ; pearl-grey mantle ; white rump and tail ; underneath, the pearl-grey is paler.

Fourteen and a half inches in length.

CXXXIX.—TERN, COMMON (*Sterna fluviatilis*).

THIS bird is much better known in the south of our Island than the last, for the reason that it breeds south of Lancashire, whilst the Arctic Tern, as has already been stated, ranges farther north.

Generally the two birds resemble one another in a very marked manner, even to the plumage, but on examination the present member will be found to be hardly so slimly built, underneath it is dull white in the place of pearl-grey, whilst the beak is tipped with coral-red instead of blood-red.

Nothing can exceed the address and suddenness with which the Common Tern darts upon such fish as approach the surface, precipitating upon its unwary victims with unerring certainty, and rising again to pursue its course as if unchecked by the effort.

The breeding season and the nesting site are both similar to the Arctic Tern, with the exception that the present species is sometimes found round inland waters.

The eggs are two or three in number and are yellowish-stone, grey or olive colour, spotted and blotched with dark brown or grey.

Food and voice same as last bird dealt with.

Many local names are in my list, the chief of them being as follows : Great Tern, Gull Teaser, Kirmew, Picket, Pictarny, Pirr, Rippock, Rillock, Scobby Scraye, Scrage, Sea Swallow, Sporre, Spurre, Tarney, Tarrack, Tarret, Terrick and Big Mow. It is also called the Pease Crow and the White Daw, similar to the Arctic species.

Orange-red bill, legs and feet ; plumage generally same as Arctic Tern, with the exception that the lower parts are more whitish.

Fourteen and a quarter inches in length.

Roseate Tern

CXL.—TERN, LESSER (*Sterna minuta*).

It is gratifying to be able to state that this beautiful little species is protected and is increasing on the Norfolk coast. As its name implies, this is the smallest Tern breeding in Great Britain, and, with the exception of the Roseate Tern, is the least numerous.

Little difference exists in the general life history of this bird and the Common Tern, the plumage is almost identical, with the exception of underneath, where the species now under consideration is much whiter; the bill also differs, being orange instead of coral-red.

The voice is shriller and thinner than in the two birds last under review, the flight is not quite so steady, and the eggs are placed farther apart and perhaps a little nearer to the water.

June is the breeding season, and the three eggs—sometimes four—are precisely similar to those of the Arctic and Common Terns.

Fish constitute the dietary.

The local names known to me are: Chit-perl, Lesser Sea Swallow, Rickel Bird and Little Mow.

It has an orange-yellow beak with a black tip; orange legs and feet; black crown and nape; white forehead and stripe over the eye, same colour; pearl-grey mantle; white tail and under parts.

Eight inches in length.

CXLI.—TERN, ROSEATE (*Sterna dougalli*).

PERHAPS of all the Terns which breed in our land the present one is the most beautiful, owing to the very delicate roseate tints on the breast from which it acquires its name.

Scotland and the north of England still claim a few pairs, but unless rigidly protected during the nesting season it is to be feared the Roseate Tern is doomed to extermination; it must certainly be included in the list of vanishing British birds.

The following notes by Mr E. G. Potter, of York, in the

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Zoologist, in reference to its piratical nature, are most interesting and also give other information of a useful character :—

“I think it is not generally known amongst students of birds that it is alleged (and I have great faith in the allegation) that the Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougalli*) robs the commoner and allied species with which it associates of its food, after the manner of the Skuas. Some time ago I asked a friend, although not a professed ornithologist, but who had lived near a colony of Roseate Terns for two or three summers, and had constant opportunities of observing the birds, to give me a few particulars of the habits of this species, and he told me as a positive fact that he had seen the Roseate Tern rob the other Terns of their food, ‘not once or twice, but hundreds of times,’ generally whilst on the wing; but he has also seen them take food from the young of the Arctic Tern with which their parents had just provided them. In fact my correspondent says: ‘They fly a great deal swifter than the Common or Arctic Tern. They very seldom fish for themselves; if they see a Common or Arctic Tern with a fish in their bills they pounce upon it just the same as a Hawk will upon a small bird, and take the fish clean out of their bills; they are very quick. I have seen them take a fish out of a young Tern’s bill that has been in the nest. I can tell a Roseate Tern amongst a thousand Common Terns. When they are flying they seem to be longer in the body and longer in the wings than any other Tern, and they have a very hoarse cry, quite different to any other Tern’s. I have never seen three Roseate Tern’s eggs in one nest, nor even heard of their laying three eggs. I visited the locality last season, but the majority of the birds had not commenced to lay their eggs, being unusually late in that respect. I did not actually see any Roseate Tern take food from the commoner species, although I watched several of the birds circling and wheeling about for minutes together. This may be accounted for by the fact that they were not busy with nesting operations, and that this robbery is practised much more when the eggs are hatched, even if they do not then obtain all their food in that manner. Whilst in the district I made all inquiries I could respecting this alleged habit of the Roseates, and could get nothing but

Roseate Tern

corroboration, sometimes even without seeking it. One of the local names for this bird is the 'Rosette' Tern, probably only a corruption or a misunderstanding of the word 'Roseate,' and sometimes it is called the 'Rosy' Tern; but another local name used more among the natives who know the species is the 'pirate' bird, from its habit of robbing the other Sea Swallows. One man with whom I am acquainted, and who has lived near this habitat of the Roseate Terns for eight years, told me he was certain he had seen these birds snatch food from the other Terns very frequently, but said it was chiefly done when they had young to feed. I do not know anyone who has had such opportunities of observing this species as my informant, or who is better acquainted with the bird or its habits in the summer season. I also questioned one of the oldest inhabitants—a sea-faring man—who I have no doubt has been in the nesting locality of these birds more often than any other living man, and he is convinced the Roseate Tern does rob the other Terns of the small fish they carry in their bills from the sea. Several other men likely to know told me the same. Another striking piece of evidence is as follows: Whilst I was watching a man repairing a small steam yacht he remarked to me, 'Well, have you been to see the pirates to-day?' That was just after my first visit to the colony in company with the owner of the above-mentioned yacht, and it was the first time I had heard the birds spoken of as 'pirates.' The term had to be explained somewhat before I really understood what was meant."

The reason for the decrease in the numbers of this bird seems to be that it does not appear to resent interference during the nesting season, hence its eggs are often taken, which, if the bird were less tolerant of interference, would not probably be the case.

The note is a "kree" oft repeated, and is more pleasant sounding than the notes uttered by the other members of the Tern family breeding amongst us.

The breeding period is in May and June, and the eggs are placed in a slight hollow in the sand or shingle by the seashore. No nesting materials are used in this country, but in America, Brewer says, "a little dry grass and seaweed are used."

As to the number of eggs laid, some observers state two

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or three, others assert that only one is laid. They are almost similar to those of the Common Tern.

The only local name known to me is that of Pease Crow.

The bill is black, and during the breeding season orange-red at the base; red legs and feet; head and upper parts resemble those of the Arctic and Common Terns, with the exception that it has a paler pearl-grey mantle; under parts white suffused with rose.

Fifteen inches and a quarter in length.

CXLII.—TERN, SANDWICH (*Sterna cantiaca*).

It is in Scotland and Ireland that this bird breeds, and on the Farne Islands there is a considerable colony.

It is not nearly so graceful on the wing as the others with which we have already treated; it seems more laboured, heavier and less aerial. The voice, too, is more of a scream, not nearly so musical as that of the bird which last received attention, indeed it has been described as being quite harsh and grating.

This Tern suffers a good deal from the ravages of the egg collector, and sooner or later, if this deplorable work continues, it will tell its own sad tale. The nesting habits are identical with those of the Common Tern, the breeding period the same as that of the Roseate Tern.

Two or three eggs are laid—sometimes more—and these are subject to considerable variation; some are yellowish-white, others a buffy stone colour, both varieties being liberally spotted with neutral tint, chestnut and deep rich brown.

The food is the same as that of its relatives; it is the largest Tern which breeds with us.

The only local name with which I am acquainted is that of Surf Tern, although Pease Crow is also applied to this bird.

It has a black bill and feet; black on top part of head; pearl-grey mantle; white rump, tail, throat and underneath; breast has a rose tint.

Sixteen inches in length.

Mistle Thrush

CXLIII.—THRUSH, MISTLE (*Turdus viscivorus*).

THE Mistle, Missel or Mistletoe Thrush is better known as the Screeching or Screaming Thrush or Storm Cock. Other local names known to me are those of Heelin (Highland), Poyet, Bell Throstle, Bull Thrush, Fulfar, Grey Thrush, Holm Thrush, Holm Screech, Missell Bird, Shreitch, Shrike Cock, Shrite, Thrice Cock and Yellow Fulfar.

It is interesting to notice that the song period ceases when that of other birds is commencing, but it is wrong to assert—as some writers have done—that it does not sing after the spring until the autumn. It certainly does sing between the spring and the autumn, but not nearly so much as during the first three or four months of the year.

As regards the song itself, it may be said to present little variation, but the notes are loud, cheering and hopeful, especially as they are so often uttered during wet and stormy weather, as a result of which the bird has acquired the name of Stormcock. It is an impressive song because of its wild and defiant character, and, as Mr Hudson observes, it “has a wonderful charm in the early days of the year, when it is a jubilant cry, a herald’s song and prophecy, sounding amidst wintry gloom and tempest.”

I have noticed that this bird almost invariably utters its song whilst perched on the topmost branches of a tall tree.

When a bird or other enemy intrudes upon the domain of this Thrush it utters a harsh, jarring note of anger and defiance, but it seems to the writer to be a timid, nervous bird, and will often forsake its nest and eggs if they be simply looked at.

In Ireland Magpies play sad havoc with this bird’s eggs, stealing them wholesale. Nevertheless, Mistle Thrushes are very plentiful in that country.

This is a very early breeder, nests often being found from February onwards. The most favourite nesting site appears to be in the fork of a tree, very frequently of an apple tree of large growth covered with moss or lichens.

The nest is very much like that of the Blackbird, and consists of a basket work of fine straws and grass, inter-

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woven with moss and lichens, but the latter are not always present. Within this structure is a layer of clay, the lining over this being composed of fine fibres and grass.

The four or five greenish-white eggs are spotted—and sometimes blotched—with chestnut and clove-brown. They vary a good deal both in colour and shape.

The food is similar to that of the Song Thrush; in the winter it feeds on the berries of the mistletoe and the mountain ash, and during the summer it greedily devours cherries, raspberries and other garden fruit. The toll taken, however, is little compared to the good done in the destruction of slugs, insects and the like.

Of the four Thrushes found in the British Isles during the summer this species is the largest and perhaps the best representative of this most interesting family, and it is a captivating sight to watch a company of them during the winter working for worms and grubs on the grass lands.

The bird is ash-brown above; white underneath with a yellow tinge and many spots of black; white on under wing-coverts; the three lateral tail-feathers are tipped with greyish-white.

Eleven inches in length.

CXLIV.—THRUSH, SONG (*Turdus musicus*).

Would that I possessed the gift of writing in adequate terms of the snail-loving, speckle-breasted Song Thrush. Let us write of its song first and foremost, for to those of us who know and love the country the voice of this bird is near and dear to us, and he so often enlivens when Nature is dormant and sleeping.

In the early spring the woods re-echo with his beautiful notes. They are so rich and uttered with so much variety, that in its own particular class of song, there is no bird in the British Isles that can in any way equal its wonderful musical performances.

The beauty of its song lies in the fact that it is hardly ever uttered twice in the same strain; the bird seems to delight in varying its notes and their metre as much as he possibly can, amusing himself by seeing what variety of combinations he has at his command.

Song Thrush

The voices of the Thrush and the Blackbird are so very distinct in their character that one cannot answer the question, "Which song do you like the better of the two?" satisfactorily. That is to say, to me, the song of the Blackbird—so mellow and measured, so rich and beautiful—is the very finest musical utterance of its kind that I ever listened to; on the other hand, the Song Thrush is quite the finest musician in his own particular song, as the Nightingale and the Skylark are in theirs.

In the world of Avine song it is extremely difficult to discriminate, indeed, in the bird world generally. Thus the shrieks and the cries of sea-birds are at times piercing and ear-splitting, or, coming nearer home, what is more unmusical than the alarm cry of the darting Jay, but they are welcomed by the observer of bird life in their way as much as the most mellow notes of the finest songster we possess. And what birds lack in song or voice, they invariably possess some interesting characteristic in other ways. Thus the Kingfisher cannot please the student with a delicious song, but what more pleasant sight than to watch the Avine emerald flying along a stream intent on the capture of some silvery dace or minnows?

Undoubtedly the Song Thrush and the Blackbird are two of the most popular song birds in the land, but I require no wicker cage in which to keep them; I far prefer listening to their sweet cadences as I am seated in some copse or wood where they sing without force of habit but of their own sweet will. Many of its notes are screeching and somewhat harsh, as if the bird cannot exactly get the notes it would like, but these are only temporarily uttered and the songster regains control of his voice in a manner that baffles description.

The Song Thrush is an early breeder. February often finds him and his mate busy nest building, and I have frequently found eggs in March and young towards the end of that month. Early nests I always find are placed in evergreens, especially laurels.

The situations chosen are many, but perhaps those mostly resorted to are thick bushes, amongst ivy, bowers of wild roses, in woods, forks or sides of trees, hedgerows, fir trees or bank sides and other situations.

The nest is a model of bird architecture, and no wall or

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building plastered by the hand of man is, from a bird lover's point of view, so finely finished, and so beautifully moulded as the nest of this bird. Externally it is composed of bent twigs, moss and grass closely interwoven, plastered within with a very thin, smooth layer of rotten wood, cemented by glutinous saliva, and laid as a coating, or fine cement, upon a thick layer of cow dung, scarcely carried so high as the brim of the nest. This lining is tough and quite waterproof, and well calculated to protect the eggs and young from the keen winds of early spring. In some



YOUNG SONG THRUSHES.

districts I have found the Song Thrush to use fir twigs externally, and in others, large nests have been made in which moss has been very conspicuous.

From four to five eggs are laid, but I have observed as many as six. They are blue in ground colour, spotted with black and sometimes brown. I have seen several quite spotless.

As to the food of this favourite musician, surely the toll taken in the way of fruit is easily to be spared, and, moreover, he partakes very largely of worms, snails, slugs, insects and berries. There is little doubt that the Song Thrush is a most beneficial bird and does very little harm.

Song Thrush

Addison writes:—"My garden invites into it all the birds of the country by offering them the conveniency of springs and shades, solitude and shelter, and I do not suffer anyone to destroy their nests in spring, or drive them from their usual haunts in fruit time. I value my garden more for being full of Blackbirds than cherries, and very frankly give them fruit for their songs. By this means I have always the music of the season in its perfection, and am highly delighted to see the Jay or the Thrush hopping about my walks and shooting before my eyes across the little alleys and glades."

Sir Richard Owen has also said, when walking in his garden and the remark was made to him that some of the cherries were not protected by nets, "They are the salaries of my orchestra, the wages of my choir."

Amongst the local names on my list are the following: Mavis, Thrusher, Grey Bird and Throstle.

The Thrush must be chiefly considered by us as a songster; it is for his music we love and listen to him, and though I am often interested in watching the bird hopping about by the side of some woodland glade intent on finding earth-worms—and this he does in an interesting manner—or smashing a snail at his favourite snail-stone, it is for his song that I admire him. I was watching a magnificent specimen recently. There was the fine, speckled-breasted bird hopping forward with long strides and covering the ground in an extraordinary manner. Suddenly he stopped, turned his head on one side with a knowing twist and quickly hopped to a certain spot a yard or so away, and unearthed a worm lying below the surface. He had heard the creature stirring underneath the ground, and with that keen sense which so many birds possess it did not take him long to locate the luscious worm.

The Song Thrush seems to me to be a nervous, timid bird; when not singing he is either attending to his nest or young or scratching about amongst the leaves in the woods or along some bank or ditch, or in the grass lands.

During the winter many of these birds are said to leave our shores, but that the following spring they are found in the old-loved spots once more. In this part of Hertfordshire we have more Thrushes during the winter than throughout the summer, so that, although our own birds may leave us, their places are taken by a great influx of

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visitors from the north, who seek the milder climate of the south, in winter.

It is olive-brown above; throat white in the middle; neck, sides and underneath ochre-yellow with dark-brown spots; pale orange-yellow on under wing-coverts.

Nine inches in length.

CXLV.—TIT, BEARDED (*Panurus biarmicus*).

THE Bearded Tit is a very interesting species because of its scarcity, and the efforts which are being put forward to protect and preserve it as a British breeding bird.

The decrease is probably attributable to the draining of the fens and reclamation of waste lands, resulting in the driving away of the birds and the breaking up of their nesting haunts; and, further, the greed of the indiscriminate collector.

It is satisfactory to record that the efforts which are being exerted on behalf of this bird are meeting with success, and although it is to be feared that the Bearded Tit must be counted as a vanishing British breeding species, we can but hope that it will be spared to us and not disappear from our avi-fauna altogether.

To observe the bird in its various life habits is extremely interesting. Living amongst the reeds as it does, and being such a delicate bird in form and colouring, the very surroundings it frequents have, for the Nature lover, a great attraction.

Moreover, the bird is most elegant and graceful as it creeps in and out of the reeds, or now clinging and searching for its food much after the manner of the Marsh and Coal Tits of our woodlands. It is in this wise I think that it mostly resembles the family in which it has been placed, otherwise there seems little reason for such relationship, indeed the bird has given rise to a considerable diversity of opinion.

It is most captivating to watch these birds—especially during the autumn and winter months when they go about in little parties—clinging to the tops of the feathered rushes and reeds, graceful in themselves, but still more graceful when these birds are seen perched on their summits.

Blue Tit

It breeds from April to July, and the nest is placed under a tuft of sedge or other herbage and is generally well concealed. The nest is made up of dead leaves, dry grass, and bits of reed, and lined with fine grass and the flower of the reed.

Five to seven eggs complete the clutch, and these are white, freckled with brown, and short streaks and specks of dark brown.

Insects and small molluscs constitute the food during the summer, whilst in winter it partakes of the seeds of reeds, etc.

Seebohm has described the vocal powers as well as anyone, thus:—"A musical 'ping,' its alarm-note a harsh Whitethroat-like 'chir-r-r-r,' and its cry of distress a plaintive 'ee-ar-ee-ar.'"

Local names: Bearded Pinnock, Least Butcher Bird, Pinnock, Reed Pheasant.

The head is bluish-grey; there is a tuft of pendent black feathers between the bill and the eye which is prolonged into a sort of pointed moustache (hence its name); greyish-white on neck and throat; white breast and belly with a yellow and pink tinge; above, it is light orange-brown; wings variegated with red, white and black; it has a long tail which is orange-brown, the outer feathers being variegated with black and white.

The female has the moustache similar colour to the cheek; the grey on the head is missing.

Six inches and a half in length.

CXLVI.—TIT, BLUE (*Parus caeruleus*).

ALL the Titmice family are interesting birds, and the little Blue Tit is at all times engaging, pretty, active and industrious.

Seen during the winter in the garden amongst the chirruping Sparrows and noisy Starlings, the blithe little bird appears like a veritable jewel, and nothing pleases me more than to watch him at the suet I hang out for him in a cocoanut husk. It is most interesting to watch him as he first clings head downwards, now on top, now to the side of the delicacy, and then off he flits without so much as a note of thanks, gone nobody knows where.

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From whence he comes to me I know not, when he has had his fill I know not where he goes, but he seems to be well aware of where he is going so soon as his appetite has been appeased. He seems to be very nervous when he observes anyone near by, but the Titmice are so engaging and active that one may be apt to interpret this activity as nervousness and restlessness.

It is one of the most attractive sights in bird life to watch these birds engaged on some lichened oak tree dexterously searching every nook and corner for the lurking insects and their larvæ. It seems strange that, in view of the great amount of good which the Titmice perform, there should be any doubt whatever as to their usefulness, but they are frequently caught in the nets which are put out to protect fruit trees—the Blue Tits especially—and are hung, drawn and quartered without the slightest inquiry being made as to why they were there. To fruit trees, I conscientiously believe, none of this family do any appreciable damage, for the buds which they destroy in their efforts to secure the injurious insects would never in all probability come to fruition.

There is, however, not much cause for complaint in regard to the persecution of the Tits, as it has been so frequently proved that they do far more good than harm—and gardeners have so often proved it for themselves—that in most places these birds are regarded as friends and not foes. Irrespective of the injurious species of insects upon which they play such havoc it should be borne in mind *the number* they destroy, for whenever I see any of the Titmice family they are sure to be busy and never yet have I seen a Tit idle. Yet they never appear to tire, always seeming full of life and vigour.

During the winter the Blue Tit partakes of seeds and scraps, and at other seasons it takes a little fruit and buds.

One may easily mistake the notes of the present bird for those of his larger relative, the Great Tit, but they are not nearly so various or loud. It consists in the main of one note, but at times I have heard it uttering weak notes of various descriptions.

The breeding season is from April to June, and the nesting sites are almost innumerable. There are at least a dozen nests in lamp-posts in this city (St Albans) at the time of writing, and it would be interesting to have a good

Coal Tit

view of the occupants as seen in this strangely selected dwelling, but that of course is impossible, as the bird probably knows. When it is remembered that a two-inch gaspipe runs up through each column it will be obvious to the reader that there is not much room to spare, especially when there are from seven to a dozen young ones in the nest! Besides lamp-posts, this bird has a decided liking for letter-boxes, pumps, holes in trees, banks, walls and elsewhere.

The nest is composed of dry grass and moss, with a by no means limited lining of hair, feathers and wool, constructed on somewhat loose lines.

I have found as many as thirteen eggs, but from seven to nine is the usual number. These are white, speckled and spotted with faint red-brown, generally at the larger end.

The local names are many, and amongst the best known are: Bottle Tit, Blue Tomtit, Billy-biter, Blue-bonnet, Bluecap, Blue Mope, Blue Oxeye, Blue Whaup, Blue Yaup, Hickwall, Hickmall, Jerrybo, Nun, Pick-cheese, Titmall and Tomtit.

The Blue Tit has a blue crown encircled with white; white cheeks with dark blue borders; olive-green back; bluish wings and tail; white tips on greater-coverts and secondaries; yellow breast and belly, traversed by a dark line of blue.

Four and a half inches in length.

CXLVII.—TIT, COAL (*Parus britannicus*).

THIS engaging little Titmouse, although not to be called common, is believed to be increasing its range in our country. In its life and habits it resembles the other members of this interesting family, if the voice is excepted, for in this respect it is shriller.

I include in the essay on this bird an extract from an excellent article by "F.H." in a London paper, which is too good to be lost in the columns of a newspaper. Here are "F.H.'s" sensible comments:—

"The case of the Tits is the most striking commentary upon the gardener's ignorance of natural facts. These beautiful little birds are almost universally detested and persecuted by fruit growers. The charge against them is

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that they attack the smaller fruit bushes just when the buds are opening, and peck the buds off in a most destructive manner. Nothing could be further from the facts. The Tits are wholly insectivorous, and their presence in a garden is wholly beneficial. It is extremely interesting to watch them at work on a day in early spring. Scores of them will flutter like a blue haze about the gooseberry



COAL TITMOUSE ($\frac{3}{5}$ Natural Size).

bushes, hopping from twig to twig, swinging head downwards, with head on one side, and quick strokes of the beak at the buds. But never at a sound bud. The gardener, seeing them thus occupied, and finding a number of buds torn open, swears at them for nuisances, and does his best to keep them away. And all the time they are doing him first-rate service. They are clearing away the myriads of tiny insects and cankers that infest the bushes. The very act of service is mistaken for destruction, and, because of this superficial observation of their operations,

Coal Tit

the little creatures are execrated, and in some parishes there still exists the practice of offering 'head money' for them. The Rev. F. O. Morris, in his *British Birds*, says very truly that 'the destruction of the Tit by the gardener is an act of economical suicide.' The buds which they prune off with their strong conical bills are buds that contain noxious insects which, if not removed by the Tits, would destroy the crop. I tried the experiment last spring in my own garden of netting in a few gooseberry bushes so that no bird could get at them during the whole winter and spring. The Tits, as usual, were busy about the other bushes; but these netted-in bushes presented a miserable appearance. They were literally eaten up by caterpillars and insects; and while the plants to which the birds had access bore splendidly, these few netted bushes had only a few riddled and skeleton little leaves on their blighted branches. The Tit, as Canon Tristram, I believe, has pointed out, cannot digest vegetable food. If it gets a fragment of vegetable food along with an insect the vegetable food is rejected; the gastric fluid will not reduce it. The bird's instinct amongst the buds is unfailing; the attacked bud is always harbouring an insect. In the summer the Tit will occasionally peck holes in apples or pears, or attack pea-pods; but always for the maggots in them. As with the buds, sound fruit or peas are never attacked. The myriads of larvæ, small beetles, insects' eggs, grubs, chrysalids, and so forth, destroyed by the Tits, would reduce our gardens to desolation if left to flourish and multiply. And it is this best—or one of the best—of his labourers, who cleans his bushes and keeps them healthy, and charges nothing for it, that the gardener regards with general and unmitigated hate!"

The Coal Tit breeds from April to June, and chooses as a nesting site a hole in a wall or bank, in the trunk of a tree or in a dead stump in the hedgerow. The nesting materials are similar to those used by the Blue Tit. The six to nine eggs are practically indistinguishable from those of the Blue Tit, though I have observed that the spots are more in the form of a zone than in those of the last-named.

The young are very pretty, and on a recent visit to Scotland I saw several nests of young fledglings, one being in a wall from which it was possible to lift off the top

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stone and expose the youngsters to the full light of the world.

The food is, of course, insects and their larvæ.

Amongst the local names on my list are the following : British Cole Tit, Black Oxeye, Caley Tit, Coalhead, and Colemouse.

It is black on the crown, throat, and front of neck ; pure white cheeks and nape ; grey above ; bluish-grey wings, with two bands of white ; white underneath with a tinge of grey.

Four and a quarter inches long.

CXLVIII.—TIT, CRESTED (*Parus cristatus*).

THIS bird is quite the rarest of the Titmice family—indeed one of the very rarest birds breeding in Great Britain—but there is a hope that if the few pairs which do breed with us be religiously protected from the despoiling hand of the indiscriminate collector the Crested Tit will increase its range in our country.

It is so restricted as a British bird that few ornithologists can write of it from observations made in the British Isles.

The large pine forests of Scotland can alone claim it during the nesting season, and we hope that in those untenanted solitudes, it will breed undisturbed until the day dawns, when to our joy we can proclaim the species as nesting this side of the border.

During the winter it associates with various other species in a similar manner to its better-known relatives.

The situations chosen as nesting sites frequently resemble those of the Coal Tit, but it will also build in the deserted nest of a Magpie or Crow, or in a squirrels' drey.

Grass, moss, hair, fur, wool and feathers constitute the somewhat frail nest, and the eggs are five or six in number. These are white, speckled and spotted with brownish-red.

The note is described as something like a spluttering "ptur-r-r-re," rather low, sometimes preceded by a shrill "zi-zi-zi."

No local names are known to me.

Hudson's description of the plumage is as follows :—

"Feathers of the crown elongated, and forming when

Great Tit

erected a pointed crest, black, edged with white ; cheeks and sides of the neck white ; throat, collar, and a streak across the temples black ; all the other parts reddish-brown ; lower parts white, faintly tinged with red."

Four inches and three-quarters in length.

CXLIX.—TIT, GREAT (*Parus major*).

THIS bird is the largest member of its family breeding in Great Britain. It is known to most dwellers in the country, but generally as the Oxeye or some other localisation.

It is not easy to overlook the Great Tit on a ramble through any wood or coppice, for it has an extraordinary loud voice for so small a bird, and the male bird is very gay in his yellow breast and black head. As to his vocal powers he is one of the most clever avine mimics with which I am acquainted. I do not know whether he has acquired the "pink, pink" of the Chaffinch, but unless the Tit be seen, it is positively impossible for the observer to distinguish the well-known alarm or call-note of the Finch referred to, from the notes uttered by this bird. Beyond his own strong bell-like note, which is such a feature in the woodland choir during early spring, and his various chatterings as he is engaged searching with lynx eyes for the lurking insects, he also imitates the cries and call-notes of other wild birds. I have heard him imitate the call of the Nuthatch so cleverly as to actually call one of those interesting birds to it.

Both when kept in a domestic state and in his wild condition, the Great Tit seems to be pugnacious, and not nearly so sociable as some of its relatives. It may be that this species will attack very young and sickly birds in a wild state, but I doubt the statement very much, until further evidence is forthcoming from reliable authorities. In captivity I admit it will attack young birds and peck out their brains, but as to its doing this when in the full enjoyment of liberty, I put little faith in such an assertion.

This bird is a veritable demon for going into a trap, and even if the bird be liberated will return time after time to be caught again, and seems to have the greatest contempt for the terrors of captivity.

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When asleep, the Great Tit presents the appearance of a round ball, erecting every feather so as not to separate from its point the adjoining ones.

The food consists of insects, seeds, fruit buds, etc.

It breeds from April to June, although in 1896 I knew of a pair of these birds successfully rearing a brood towards the middle of December.

The peculiarities in regard to nesting sites are similar to those of the Blue Tit, as also are the materials of which the structure is composed.

Seven or eight eggs are usually laid, but sometimes there are only half a dozen, and at other times as many as twelve! They are indistinguishable from those of the Nuthatch, but much larger than those of any other member of the interesting Titmouse family.

The best known local names appear to be those of Oxeye, Bee-biter, Blackcap, Black-headed Tomtit, Great Black-headed Tomtit, Tom Collier, Tomtit, Sit-ye-down, and Saw Sharpener.

The head, throat, and band down centre of breast are black; olive-green back; white cheeks, and also a spot of same on the nape; yellow breast and belly.

Six inches in length.

CL.—TIT, LONG-TAILED (*Acredula rosea*).

I WILL at once state how very rare it is that one sees a Titmouse upon the ground. I think I can remember seeing a Great Tit on the ground on a few solitary occasions, but cannot call to mind observing any of the others, unless it was a Blue Tit during the depth of winter, when the necessities of life drove the little bird from the tree tops. Hanging suspended from the branches and trunks like so many minute feathered monkeys, the Titmouse family are in their element, and they are seen thus to best advantage.

Its singularly long tail, from which the Long-tailed Tit has acquired its name, adds in a striking manner to its appearance, both when observed flying and also when at work amongst the branches.

It is not only noted for its long tail, but also for the beautiful nest which it constructs. In my opinion it is the

Long-tailed Tit

most wonderful example of bird architecture in the British Islands, and the nest of no other British breeding bird can be compared to it.

It is composed of lichens, moss, wool, spiders' webs, skeletonised leaves, pieces of old newspapers and a profusion of feathers. It is oval-shaped, with one small hole



NEST OF LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE.

in the upper part of the side by which the bird enters. The feathers are used as a lining, and a friend counted as many as 1779 from one nest. These included some Pheasants' feathers, and my friend expressed surprise at this, as there were no Pheasants breeding within five or six miles! When it is borne in mind that each feather represents a single journey, the perseverance of the parent birds may be assumed. The Rev. F. O. Morris states that he knew of a nest containing no less than three thousand

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feathers! The outside of the nest sparkles with silver-coloured lichens adhering to a firm texture of moss and wool, and when examined, the wonder increases as to how it is possible for two small birds to weave such a beautiful nest and perform such delicate workmanship.

Many people ask how it is possible for this bird to sit in the nest when it has such a long tail, but this is to be explained by the fact that it brings its tail over its head when sitting in the nest.

The breeding season is from March to June, and I have found the bird to have a partiality for furze bushes. It also selects hedges, bushes and other situations. The eggs vary in number from six to ten, but I have known as many as seventeen. They are pure white or pearly-grey in ground colour, sparingly spotted with bright red and a few faint purple marks.

The food is composed almost entirely of insects, and is not of such a varied description as that of those species previously mentioned.

The note consists of a prolonged trill, low and delicate. Many birds converse together in a low, querulous tone, more especially when a small company is lighted upon in the tree tops, deftly searching for food.

It has a string of local names, the most prominent of which are those of Long Tom, Barrel Tit, Bottle Tit, Bottle Tom, Can-bottle, Caper Longtail, Longpod, Long-tailed Capon, Long-tailed Mag, Long-tailed Muffin, Long-tailed Pie, Mum-ruffin, Poke Pudding, Rose Muffin, and Tree Huck-muck.

It is white on the head, neck, throat, breast, and part of the outer tail-feathers; black back, wings and six middle tail-feathers; above the eye is a streak of black; a tinge of rose-red on the sides of back and scapulars; reddish-white underneath.

The tail is very long; the beak very short.

Five inches and three quarters in length.

CLI.—TIT, MARSH (*Parus palustris*).

I HAVE often wondered why this bird was given the name of Marsh Tit, for although it is frequently found in damp and marshy localities, it is quite as often to be

Twite

located in woods, gardens, orchards, hedgerows and other situations.

At a distance, without the aid of the field-glass, it is extremely difficult to distinguish it from its relative the Coal Tit, which has already received attention.

Much cannot be added to the history of this Tit which has not previously been embodied in the descriptions of the other members of this family, although it should be stated that the present species is not nearly so noisy as either the Blue Tit or the Great Tit.

It breeds from April to June, and is very fond of placing its nest in the holes of rotten tree stumps—indeed, that seems to be quite the favourite situation. It will take advantage of a hole already made, but when this is not forthcoming will readily excavate one for itself.

The nesting materials are made up of moss, rabbits' flick, wool from sheep, and the down of the ripe catkins of the willow.

Six to eight eggs are laid; these are white, with more like patches of red-brown, rather than specks and spots, but faint. They are very similar to those of the Coal and Blue Tits.

The food is the same as that of the Coal Tit, but the voice is neither so sharp or loud.

The local names on my list include those of Blackcap, Black-headed Tomtit, Joe Bent, Little Black-headed Tomtit, Smaller Oxeye and Willow Biter.

The bird has a black forehead, crown, nape and head; grey above; dark grey wings, edges lighter; dull white cheeks, throat and breast.

Four inches and a half in length.

A new variety of this bird—the Willow Tit—has been discovered in England, but, as yet, a description of it does not come within the scope of the present work.

CLII.—TWITE (*Linota flavirostris*).

IN the south this very near relative of the far better-known Linnet is only known as a winter visitor. It breeds in the Highlands, being especially plentiful in the Hebrides and in many districts of Scotland; it is also stated to breed in the Northern and Midland counties.

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Its life and habits much resemble those of the Linnet, as also its song, but it lacks the quality of the Linnet's voice, although it is shriller.

It is justly termed the Linnet of the Mountains or the Mountain Linnet.

May or the beginning of June is the nesting period, and in wild mountainous districts the nest is placed amongst tall heath, usually on or close to the ground. At other times, the nest is placed in furze and similar bushes, or underneath a clod of earth turned up by the plough.

Bents, heather twigs, with a lining of root fibres, wool, hair, or the down of thistles, feathers, and the finer parts of the heath, constitute the structure.

The four to six eggs are nearly white, with a faint blue or green tinge, spotted with red, brown or dark purple, with occasionally a few streaks of a lighter red tinge.

The food is probably identical with that of the Linnet.

Rockie, Rock Linnet, Heather Lintie, Mountain Linnet, Rock Lintie and Twite Finch are the local names known to me.

It is dark brown above, with light brown edgings to the feathers ; there is a tinge of red on the rump of the male bird ; tawny-brown throat ; dull white breast and belly, with dark brown streaks on the flanks ; yellow beak dark brown feet.

Five and a quarter inches in length.

CLIII.—WAGTAIL, GREY (*Motacilla melanope*).

THE Wagtails derive their name from the incessant or tremulous motion of the tail. Like the leaves of the aspen tree, which tremble in the slightest breath of wind, the least movement on the part of the bird is the means of putting the tail in motion, and the latter measures nearly the length of their slender and beautifully moulded bodies, making them as elegant a family of birds as any which inhabit the British Isles.

In the opinion of many, the subject of this sketch is the handsomest of a handsome family, symmetrical in form, and of chaste and delicate colouring.

Throughout the year the present species is subject to two different changes of plumage. The male, as seen in

Grey Wagtail

his summer dress of head and back bluish-grey, pale streak over the eye, black patch on the throat, passing to pale yellow, is a sight to behold and one which gladdens the rambler whenever he is fortunate enough to light upon him.

The Grey Wagtail cannot be called common, a few pairs only being found in the localities which it favours with its presence.

From March to June is the breeding season, and the nest is generally placed near water of some kind, underneath an overhanging bank, in quarries, on shelves of rock and other like situations. In a backward springtide they are later in commencing operations as a natural consequence. During these early days they are very jealous of their nest being interfered with, and I have known them desert if the same has simply been looked into!

Roots, bents, and moss, with a nice hair lining—white preferred—are the materials used in the construction of the nice cup-shaped nest, and it is very cunningly concealed so that the novice may often pass it by unobserved. I knew of one placed in the inside of an old nest of the Dipper.

The eggs number from four to six and are pale French-grey, clouded and mottled with a faint and creamy-brown. Sometimes a few black lines are present at the larger end.

They have generally one brood, but occasionally two, in the year.

When the nest contains young, the parent birds are very anxious when it is approached, flying round the intruder on restless wings, uttering their piercing cry of "wheew," which is only heard when in the close vicinity of the nest. When the young birds leave the nest the plumage resembles that of the parents.

Like the Dipper, this bird loves the waterfall and the noisy hum which attends it, flitting from stone to stone in the bed of the rushing stream, and with running gait wading in and out of the water after the small molluscs, water beetles and larvæ of insects that pass their early existence in the watery depths, or with an upward spring it catches a gnat that dances on gossamer wings above the water. It varies this interesting performance with its liquid song, which is of no great power or variety, but sweet and

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lively. This is uttered in the early spring and also in the autumn. It possesses an alarm-note of a sharp double character.

On the wing the flight is undulating, rising and falling, and they constantly utter the call-note of "chita, chita" as they propel themselves along.

It is known in various districts as the Dun Wagtail, Grey Wagster, Wangtail, Winter Wagtail, and Yellow Wagtail.

Summer, bluish-grey head and back; pale streak over the eye; black throat; bright yellow underneath. Winter, whitish on chin and throat, merging into yellow.

Seven inches and a half in length.

CLIV.—WAGTAIL, PIED (*Motacilla lugubris*).

I do not know that there is any British bird which interests and amuses me so much as this very engaging and beautiful little species. Even the most casual and indifferent rambler by the country side is attracted by the bird's black-and-white plumage—so pleasingly contrasted—and its lively and fascinating gait.

I prefer to watch it running and walking alternately on some newly-ploughed land, as it now runs along a furrow, now perches on the summit of one of the upturned clods. The rich brown soil seems such an excellent background that I know of no other situation in which to watch the bird to better advantage.

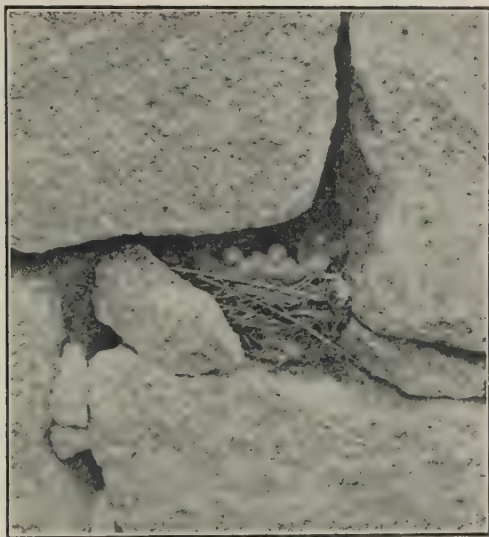
On a beautiful October morning recently I watched one of these birds in such a situation as I have just described, and listened to it uttering its pleasant little song. It does not seem to sing frequently, and I had never heard it previously uttering such a sustained and pleasing melody. It reminded me very strikingly of the song of the Meadow Pipit, and as I had not long since been continually amongst these latter birds on the Ayrshire hills, the similarity between the two songs was all the more remarkable to me. Watching the bird through a field-glass, one could see its tiny bubbling throat and admire the more closely its exquisite black-and-white livery.

The call-note is a sharp chirp of two syllables, resembling the words, "cheese-it, cheese-it, cheese-it," or "tisit, tisit,

Pied Wagtail

tisit." In the springtime the male also utters a very low warble, scarcely to be heard a few yards away.

In its search for insects the lively disposition of this bird is strikingly portrayed. On the newly turned-up land already referred to it appears to find a successful feeding ground, but it is also partial to lands where cattle are found, and will run underneath the latter without the slightest fear. It also resorts to the banks of rivers, and it



NEST AND EGGS OF PIED WAGTAIL.

is an engaging sight to watch the dapper little creature running nimbly along the water's brink, perchance paddling into the water and securing the insects which swarm over the surface.

It is, with some people, inseparable from the water—hence some of its curious local and old-fashioned names—but this appears to be an erroneous impression, as I frequently meet with it breeding miles away from water of any kind.

It nests from April to July and chooses as a nesting site

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holes in walls, quarries, roofs of buildings, the eaves of haystacks, stacks of wood, banks and crevices of almost every description. The nest is very neat, composed of roots, grasses and moss, with a lining of hair, feathers and wool.

The eggs usually number four or five, but an extraordinary clutch of twelve was reported, in 1896, by Mr H. S. Rivers to the Herts Natural History Society.

The eggs are greyish-white, very thickly spotted with black or greyish-brown. A variety of the egg laid by the House Sparrow very closely resembles that of this species, and may be mistaken for it.

Amongst the local names are the following: Dish Washer, Water Wagtail, Washer Disher, Peggy Wash Disher, White Wagtail, Black-and-White Wagtail, Nanny Wagtail, Wangtail, Wash-dish, Washer Woman and Winter Wagtail.

In some districts this Wagtail is only a summer visitor, but although doubtless many birds migrate annually, it is found in some parts of the country all the year round.

Its flight is jerky and erratic; it seems to have no particular object in view when flying, and indeed, when one is observing it in its graceful actions on the ground, it never seems to premeditate; its next performance appears to come upon it quite suddenly and without any preconceived notion of what its next action might be. Now it will stand still for a moment and move its tail rapidly up and down; now it will suddenly start catching insects, running nimbly hither and thither; now flit a few yards away, and then when one is wondering what the bird will do next, it flies off in a slanting direction, seeming to know not whither it is going.

In summer the plumage is variegated with black and white; black on chin, throat and neck; a little white on side of neck. In winter, the back and scapulars are ash-grey; white chin and throat with a black gorget.

Seven and a half inches in length.

CLV.—WAGTAIL, YELLOW (*Motacilla rayii*).

WHEN the dark days of winter are past and our resident birds are continually pouring forth their love songs, then has the time come when we may look for the appearance of

Yellow Wagtail

our Summer Migrants, many of them of beautiful plumage and pleasing voices, who help to swell the grand chorus of music that fills the sylvan glade and meadow.

When March winds are raising clouds of whistling dust along the roadways, the vanguard of our bird visitors appear; in the month following, the main body of the feathered army arrive. About the middle of the latter month we may begin to watch for the arrival of the subject of this sketch.

In some districts the Yellow Wagtail is by far the commonest member of its family, the numbers being greater than the Pied and Grey species combined. In other localities it is rarely met with, yet the surroundings are such that one might reasonably expect to find it.

This bird loves the marsh and water; here, its habits can be watched as it runs in and out of the water in search of aquatic insects, but it is more of a fly-catcher than the other two species upon our list, being very fond of catching insects upon the wing.

Although fond of marshy ground, it by no means confines itself to these situations. It haunts potato and turnip grounds, and where cattle are grazing it is a regular attendant, an object lesson indeed in counter attraction: the cattle attract the insects, and the latter attract the birds. It runs about and keeps so close to the animals that it is really wonderful sometimes how it escapes being trampled under foot.

When on the wing this bird often gives vent to a few liquid notes, a mere apology for a song, undoubtedly the poorest singer of an unmusical but, at the same time, extremely interesting family.

It breeds from May on to July, and the situation chosen as a nesting site varies considerably. It nests on a bank or at the bottom of a wall where a stone has been loosened or detached. The middle of a hay-field is a very favourite spot, whilst at other times it will be found nesting amidst growing corn or under the cover of the broad leaves of the turnip.

The nesting materials are similar to those of its Pied relative, with the exception of wool, and my friend, Matthew Barr, of Beith, Ayrshire, informs me that, in his neighbourhood, he has noticed particularly that this

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bird is very partial to *black* horsehair rather than any other colour.

The five or six eggs are something like those of the Sedge Warbler, but larger. They are whitish, mottled nearly all over with yellow-brown and ash-brown. Occasionally there are a few hair lines of black traversing the larger end. They often nest twice in a season, and when the young leave the family nursery they lack the beautiful sheen of the adult bird.

When they arrive in the spring the colour of the male bird especially is charming to behold; it is so beautiful and clean before it becomes stained and soiled from the manifold duties imposed in rearing its brood.

This is one of the shyest birds in regard to allowing the whereabouts of its nest to be known. The Skylark's nest may often be found by watching the bird fluttering over the spot; the same characteristic applies to the Yellow Wagtail, but it is far more jealous of being watched or tracked to its nest than Shelley's favourite "scorner of the ground."

Even when the rambler has no intention of watching the birds going to their nest, they will fly around him, uttering a chirp which reminds one of a young bird when it is hungry and waiting to be fed, a very monotonous sound. The male when flying about the nest has the habit of spreading out his tail-feathers and letting the rest of his delicate and attractive plumage hang loosely about his body, thus presenting an appearance which cannot but excite the keenest admiration of the observer. This proceeding takes place many times, but it is all feigned until the wary little bird can make up its mind that the coast is clear. It utters a sharp, double call-note, something like "chip, chip"; alarm-note, "chip-tuwee, chip-tuwee."

They collect in large parties on their feeding grounds in the autumn, preparatory to taking their departure for Africa, where the winter is spent.

The local names include those of Cow Bird, Seed Bird, Seed Lady, Spring Wagtail, Summer Wagtail, Wangtail, Yellow Wagster and Ray's Wagtail.

Greenish-olive on top of head, lore, nape, back and scapulars; over the eye is a bright streak of yellow; sulphur-yellow underneath.

Six inches in length.

Dartford Warbler

CLVI.—WARBLER, DARTFORD (*Melizophilus undatus*).

THIS species was first noticed as a British bird by Dr Latham in the year 1773, who procured a pair from Bexley Heath, near Dartford, Kent, whence its English name.

At the present time it is a threatened British species; here again the undue spoliation of its eggs by collectors is greatly to be deplored, but it is stated that man alone is not altogether responsible for the diminution in its numbers, as in severe winters its ranks have been considerably thinned.

What stands the bird in good stead is its secretive habits; it is extremely shy and recluse, concealing itself in thick furze bushes and tangled heath; owing to this, observation of the bird is carried on amidst difficulties, and the extremely limited distribution of the species in our country also prevents a lucid description of its life.

As Edward Newman has stated, the Dartford Warbler reminds one more of the Wren than any other British bird; it is lively and vivacious, and possesses many of the characteristics of the latter species, particularly in its cocked-up tail and perky movements, and immediately at the sight of an observer carefully skulking into the undergrowth.

Fifty years ago, or perhaps less, this bird was far more numerous than at the present day, for Newman writes of it, in 1849, as a common bird in the southern parts of Surrey.

It behoves us, therefore, to religiously protect it during the nesting season, for once the indigenous stock is exhausted, it would be a difficult matter to induce the bird to again take up its quarters amongst us.

Amongst British Warblers this species is quite peculiar, inasmuch that it possesses a curious impetuous song; an excessively lively disposition; that although so delicate it exists on open breezy commons; and its small size, great length of tail, and shortness of wings, are characteristics worthy of note.

April to June is the breeding season, the nest being placed in some thick furze bush not far from the ground.

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The materials used are similar to those of the Whitethroat, but Montagu states that the tender dead branches of furze, intermingled very sparingly with wool, are added. He found in one nest a single Partridge's feather.

The four to six eggs somewhat resemble those of the Whitethroat, but are not so large; they have a greenish tinge, speckled all over with olive-brown and cinereous on a greenish-white ground, the markings becoming thicker and forming a zone at the larger end.

Flies, moths, grasshoppers and other insects constitute its food, and these it catches in a dexterous and interesting manner. In this wise it reminds one of the Fly-catcher, for it will take up its station on the topmost branches of some bush, and sally forth incessantly after flies and other insects, resuming its watch tower on each occasion.

The curious impetuous song is uttered with much vigour, especially in the spring, either when the bird is perched on some topmost or outside twig, or hovering over a bush; it is often continued for some minutes at a stretch. A harsh, scolding note is also uttered repeatedly, and a loud but musical call-note.

Fire-eyed Chat and Furze Wren are the only local names on my list.

Greyish-black above; blackish-brown on wing-coverts and feathers; broadly tipped on outer tail-feathers, and narrowly elsewhere, with light brownish-grey; chestnut-brown underneath; white belly; long tail; very short wings.

Five inches in length.

CLVII.—WARBLER, GARDEN (*Sylvia hortensis*).

THIS bird appears to be very local in its distribution, and is not so well known to dwellers in the country as some of the other Warblers. To those who know the bird, however, the mention of its name will recall pleasant memories of evergreen shrubberies and leafy bowers, for these are the surroundings in which it is usually found.

A summer visitor to our island, it generally arrives from Africa, its winter home, towards the middle of April, but further north it does not appear until May. When this latter delightful month has arrived, when the whole

Garden Warbler

country-side is clothed in its new raiment, and wild creatures are busy with parental cares and affections, its charming song may be heard, as it now rises and falls, swelling out as full as that of the mellifluous Blackbird.

Some portion of the song of the Garden Warbler resembles very much that of the Greater Whitethroat; the time and the number of notes are almost identical, but the notes of the present species are not so thin and sharp as those of the Whitethroat.

By some this bird is considered little inferior to the Nightingale in regard to its sweet cadences, but comparisons such as these in the world of avine song do not appeal to the writer, comment upon which has been made in previous sketches.

The bird is undoubtedly a fine musician, and is heard to the best advantage soon after its arrival amongst us; when nest building is in full swing, the periods of song are longer sustained, and just for those first few days it is a musical treat to listen to the bird uttering its sweet melodies. Later on, the song strikes one as rather disappointing, for when giving ear to its vocal efforts the listener, who is in expectation of hearing a songster of much repute, is vexed to hear the bird shortening its rich and best parts and prolonging the thin and piercing notes. For all that, it is a fine songster, and where the bird is a regular summer visitor, its voice would be sadly missed by the attentive listener to Nature's gladsome minstrels.

It is exceedingly shy and wary, and not easily approached; it loves to hide out of sight behind the broad leaves of trees, and when disturbed moves away mouse-like into the impenetrable thicket.

To study the habits of the bird with any measure of success and get a good view of the shy little Warbler, the observer must sit quietly down amongst the undergrowth, for preference near to a sycamore tree, for which it has a weakness, and amidst the broad leaves of which it delights to ramble.

In these situations it evidently finds insects of all sorts that may be resting thereon. It does not appear to leave the branch or twig and catch flies on the wing, a very common and noticeable trait in the characters of many of the Warblers.

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Identical with most of our other song birds, the one under review is dressed in sober plumage and possesses no gaudy or alluring markings, as will be noted from the description given below.

May and June is the breeding season, and the nest is placed in bramble bushes, gardens, shrubberies and similarly secluded situations, and usually near the ground. The nest in some localities is frequently placed in a patch of dog's mercury, which students of our flora need no reminding grows in such abundance in woods and the like.

It is a fragile but neat structure, composed of dried stems of goosegrass; it is also stated moss, roots, wool, cobwebs and horsehair are used.

The four to five eggs are muddy-white, stained and spotted with greenish-brown, lighter or darker.

Besides insects, fruit and berries are relished.

The local names on my list include those of Fauvette, Fig Bird, Garden Fauvette, Nettle Creeper, Nettlemonger, Passerine Warbler and Greater Pettychaps.

Occasionally two broods are reared during the season, but in spite of this, the birds do not seem to increase; each summer brings back a pair to the old-loved spot, but many situations which seem eminently suited for the bird, lack its welcome presence.

Greyish-brown above, tinged with olive; a patch of ash-grey underneath the ear; dull white on throat; grey on breast and flanks, tinged with rust colour; remaining underparts dull white.

Five and a quarter inches in length.

CLVIII.—WARBLER, GRASSHOPPER (*Locustella naevia*).

THIS curious little Warbler is somewhat similar to the Whitethroat in size, but darker in plumage.

It is a summer visitor, arriving towards the middle of April from its winter retreats in Northern Africa and Southern Europe.

It appears to be very local in its distribution, and like the last-mentioned bird on our list—the Garden Warbler—seems unknown in the very spots which appear admirably suited for it.

Grasshopper Warbler

This species, like the Corncrake, is one of the most difficult to observe, on account of its shy and retiring habits. It never flies very far at a stretch, nor mounts in the air to any extent, but skulks and hides amongst the densest undergrowth of its favourite resorts. These latter are young plantations, where the grass is permitted to grow long and rank, and gets twisted into tangled masses. These plantations are usually deserted after the trees have grown up to the height of an ordinary man, and it is interesting in this respect to notice how various species of birds are found in a plantation of trees, as these trees reach different periods in their growth. The field ornithologist knows exactly what species to look for according to the progress the plantation is making, and as an instance of my meaning, when the trees have reached a certain altitude, he knows that he will have to search for the Grasshopper Warbler in vain. Yet other species then come along and nest, for the conditions are just suited to their requirements. These species in turn forsake the spot as the trees grow too tall for them, and these again are replenished by others, and so it goes on. Thus, a very interesting series of bird observations may be made by paying attention to a single plantation during successive seasons, and one looks back with pleasure upon the species stalked as each year rolls by.

To revert to the bird under notice, when the plantations above referred to are forsaken, it then betakes itself to quarters in the hay-fields, amongst the waving crops, where the process of hay-making frequently interferes with its domestic affairs and makes it in consequence again search for pastures new.

Of the song of this bird—it is one of our very few ventriloquists—it is often thought by some who listen to it, to proceed from some animal or stridulating insect rather than from a bird, but to the cultivated ear of the ornithologist it is unmistakable. It consists of a monotonous, metallic, whirring sound, which can be heard some distance away. It is usually commenced in a low tone and gradually becomes strengthened as it proceeds, until it reaches its utmost volume. It remains in this latter for some seconds, then finishes with a sort of click, as if the bird were out of breath by its curious vocal efforts, but after a few moments' rest the song is resumed in the

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same manner. The exact spot from whence the sound proceeds is very difficult to locate, as the performer, from its habit of turning its head from side to side, has the ability to cheat the ear of the listener. If one is fortunate enough to creep stealthily towards the bird and watch its movements, it will be seen that the head moves quicker and quicker as the bird gets enraptured with its own voice. It sings best, and is heard to the best advantage on a sultry summer evening, when daylight is giving place to twilight, on those calm evenings which the Nature lover knows and loves so well. At such times the song is often continued far into the silent watches of the night. It must not be thought, however, that it does not sing during the day—an erroneous impression still held by many in regard to the Nightingale, as well—as on their arrival in this country they are to be heard during the day time before family cares take up their attention. Whilst singing, the bird may be seen perched on a bush or twig, or clinging to a stalk of grass, or some variety of plant, and if disturbed will stop abruptly and drop by stages out of sight, creeping away amongst the herbage to begin again at another spot.

My friend, Matthew Barr, of Beith, Ayrshire, who, together with John Craig, has found a great many nests of this bird in that county, has had excellent opportunities for studying the bird, and sends me the following notes:—

“You may look for the nest in the last week of May, when the flowers of the hyacinth are appearing in clouds of blue in the grassy glades of the wood. The nest is built entirely of broad blades of withered grass, is mostly cunningly concealed in the heart of a tussock of grass close to the ground, where the raspberry canes rear their heads, the flickering leaves of which imitate the flight of the butterfly when moved by the gentle and balmy breezes of a summer's day. I have also seen the nest amongst the small shoots growing from a tree stump, and at a later period of the year, when the rank grass has grown to its utmost length, I have seen the nest occasionally fastened to the long stalks, in a similar manner to that of the Whitethroat. The nest is always very difficult to find, but by a close study of the bird I find that the male often betrays its whereabouts by singing near to the place where it is concealed, and by a diligent search near the spot the

Marsh Warbler

searcher will be rewarded for his pains. Often when you come suddenly on the sitting bird it rises above the grass and flies a few yards, and then drops out of sight; if a sharp look-out is not kept it will probably escape notice. I have flushed the bird several times before I could determine the exact spot where it had risen from, and there is always the fear of destroying the nest and contents by trampling upon it. I have met with a few birds that never gave you an opportunity of observing them, for when they left the nest, instead of appearing in the air, they ran away amongst the undergrowth in the manner of a mouse, the only thing you would hear and see was the rustling and moving of the grass. The eggs are often six in number, white, thickly spotted all over with dark red, but I have seen two other varieties, one spotted all over and zoned at the larger end, and the other zoned at the large end without spots. The earliest nest of this species that I have seen was one with six eggs on the 11th of May; the latest one on the 2nd of August with four eggs."

The nesting season is about the middle of May and goes on until July, and the situations, materials used, and number and colour of the eggs, have already been correctly set out by my esteemed and vigilant friend whose notes I have quoted.

The food consists solely of insects.

Amongst the local names on my list are those of Birr-bird, Brakehopper, Brake Locustelle, Cricket Bird, Grass-hopper Lark, Locustelle, Razor-grinder, Reeler and Rattlesnake Bird.

It is light greenish-brown above, a mottled appearance being given by the middle of each feather being darker; pale brown underneath, with darker brown spots on neck and breast; light brown feet.

The female lacks the brown spots on the breast.

Five and a half inches in length.

CLIX.—WARBLER, MARSH (*Acrocephalus palustris*).

PROFESSOR WARDE FOWLER seems to have been one of the first ornithologists to study this bird in England to any extent, he having observed it at Oxford in 1888 and

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subsequent years, but it was first discovered in England in 1861 by Mr Saville in Cambridgeshire.

Since that time, the bird, as it has become better known, has been found nesting in many English counties, and, so far as I am personally able to testify, particularly in Somersetshire.

One does not wonder at its being overlooked by English ornithologists when it is remembered how difficult it is to distinguish it from the more prevalent and better-known Reed Warbler.

The difference in the plumage appears to be that in the present species the feathers are olive-coloured in their appearance, whilst those of the Reed Warbler are more rufous.

The song is of a somewhat similar character to its relative above mentioned, and listening to it one might easily be led to believe that a Reed Warbler of an unusually vivacious and sweet disposition was the bird from whom the notes proceeded. Its song has been described as the *piccolo* in the orchestra of bird music.

Two nests found near Bath were both well hidden in unusually thick meadow-sweet stems—indeed this seems a very favourite nesting site—situated on a piece of ground somewhat conspicuous to the passer-by. It is also placed among osier beds, sometimes in low bushes, but invariably on dry, fine ground, generally near water, but I believe I am correct in stating never *over* water.

The nest is composed of dry grasses and moss, with a lining of horsehair, whilst sometimes a dead leaf or wisp of sheep's wool or spiders' webs are used.

Five to seven eggs are laid, and these are bluish-white in ground colour, occasionally tinged with green; the latter being obscured by two sets of blotches, the fainter ones pearl or violet-grey, the more conspicuous, brown or purplish-black. The eggs may, as a rule, be distinguished from those of the Reed Warbler by the much paler ground colour and the larger, bolder and fewer spots.

The bird arrives on our shores from Africa—where the winter is spent—during May, and some seasons as late as June, and the breeding season is June and July.

It feeds wholly on insects.

I know of no local names for this species; it has yet to become much better known before any are accorded to it;

Reed Warbler

let us hope that worse confusion still will not arise on this score, and that it will always remain known as the Marsh Warbler.

Professor Warde Fowler—to whom bird-lovers in this country are under an obligation for his enthusiasm in studying the bird when so little known, and for undertaking a special journey to Switzerland for the purpose of becoming acquainted with it—writes thus as to the points which struck him on his first acquaintances with it:—“The white throat, which is fluffed out as it sings; his brown head without any visible stripe over the eye—though there seems to be reason to believe that this becomes slightly apparent in mature individuals—his olive-brown back, and flesh-coloured legs. . . . The Reed Warbler, as a living bird, differs slightly in having a more rufous back and slate-coloured legs; but these differences soon cease to be at all obvious when the birds have been dead some time, and it is this which has caused so much difficulty in identifying the skins of the two species, and in using them for illustration in pictures.”

CLX.—WARBLER, REED (*Acrocephalus streperus*).

SOME of the distinguishing features between this species and the Marsh Warbler have already been mentioned in my sketch of the latter bird. The Reed Warbler also resembles in many ways the mimicking Sedge Warbler, particularly so in its general appearance, habits and vocal powers. This bird, however, is not nearly so plentiful as the Sedge Warbler, and this being the case, is not so well known in the country.

About the end of April or early in May, the Reed Warbler arrives on our shores from its winter home in Africa, and almost at once commences nesting operations, which go on until early in July.

It is an engaging bird, and resorts to dense reed beds and marsh lands, the borders of rivers and the like, but in districts which appear eminently suitable for it, it is frequently entirely absent, a curious fact in bird life which has apparently never yet been satisfactorily explained.

It prefers as a nesting haunt dense reed and willow beds, or thickets by the water-side, although on occasions

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the bird may be chanced upon some distance from water, where plenty of cover is afforded.

Although it is a shy, skulking species, it frequently betrays its presence by its loquaciousness, being a persistent songster, or by the utterance of a harsh, scolding note.

Similar to the Sedge Warbler, it is nocturnal in its habits to a high degree, and when seen in the open—a somewhat rare occurrence—possesses the same characteristic of flying from one hiding-place to another.

The nest is very deep, composed of dried grasses and reeds, and is wonderfully secured between the stems of reeds. Leaves, moss and wool are also used.

The four or five eggs are greenish-white, marked with spots and dashes of green and pale brown.

Small insects constitute the food, but it is stated that soft fruits and berries are also eaten.

The song, although somewhat similar to that of the Sedge Warbler, is not so powerful, but it is a very persistent songster and is sweeter than its relative. It will frequently start up singing when an intruder is near.

The local names include those of Marsh Reedling, Night Warbler, Reed Bird, Reed Chucker, and Reed Wren.

Reddish-brown above, without spots; between the eye and the beak is a spot or streak of white; white throat; pale buff underneath.

Five and a half inches in length.

CLXI.—WARBLER, SEDGE (*Acrocephalus phragmitis*).

I HAVE not seen a better account of this interesting bird, shortly stated, than that sent to me by an esteemed correspondent. He writes:—"Singular amongst the avifauna of Great Britain, the little Sedge Warbler may truly be called the English Mocking-Bird, for although we have many species of birds which imitate the songs of other birds, none possess the power of mimicry displayed by this little songster. It is a soberly-plumaged yet graceful creature, and its cleverly-constructed nest is not less attractive. Its habitat is amongst the sedges and rushes growing by riversides and in marshy places. Were it but an inhabitant of a foreign clime its merits would be more

Sedge Warbler

extolled, as it is a wonderful mimic, and will imitate the harsh cry of the Sparrow, the merry twitter of the Swallow, or the sweeter music of the Skylark, Thrush, or Blackcap, with such skill that the naturalist is often deceived and wonders to hear the notes of birds in a place which he knows is uncongenial to the habits of the bird he thinks he hears. It is also an accomplished ventriloquist, so that it is often difficult to tell where the song comes from."

It is an untiring and varied songster; its notes are uttered in a hurried manner, and the bird seems as if singing an angry or scolding song at the listener, rather than one which pleases him to utter. The opening notes somewhat resemble the song of the Greater Whitethroat, but are louder and more strident. Several may often be heard in chorus, and as this species frequently sings at night, it is undoubtedly mistaken by the inexperienced ear for the Nightingale.

The Sedge Warbler is a summer migrant, arriving from Northern Africa and Asia Minor—its winter homes—about the end of April.

It is an engaging bird, and even when singing often appears to be occupied in searching for food, which consists of aquatic insects, slugs and small caterpillars.

With the exception of the Grasshopper Warbler, the bird now under consideration is one of the most difficult of this family to observe closely; at times one may catch a glimpse of the feathered mimic on the topmost twigs of some bush bordering a stream, or hard by water of some kind; but when observed it dips into the undergrowth and is lost to sight, although with a good pair of field-glasses one may perhaps follow the artful little creature as it cleverly contrives to see and yet not itself be seen! Yet a stone or other missile pitched somewhere in the neighbourhood of the bird will start him off singing for all he is worth, and during May and June a ramble by the water-side would lose much of its charm minus the curious notes of this water-loving Warbler.

May to June is the breeding season, and although some ornithologists state that as a rule the nest is placed near the ground, most of those nests which have come under my notice have been two or three feet from same in some hedge-row bordering a ditch, or a bush near the water's edge. Occasionally it is found in a tuft of grass or other tangled

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vegetation. In spite of statements to the contrary, I agree with Selby and others that the Sedge Warbler does frequent reeds, and this to a very large extent.

The neat little nest consists of stems of plants, moss, coarse grass, with a lining of hair and fine dry grass.

The five or six eggs do not appear to vary much either in size or colouring. They are pale brown, slightly mottled with a darker shade, and in many eggs which I have seen there has been a thin dark streak upon them.

Amongst the local names are those of Lesser Reed Sparrow, Lesser Water Sparrow, Mock Bird, Reed Fauvette, Sedge Bird, Sedge Reedling, and Sedge Wren.

Greyish-brown above; a broad, distinct, yellowish-white streak above the eye; pale buff underneath; white throat.

Four inches and three quarters in length.

CLXII.—WARBLER, WILLOW (*Phylloscopus trochilus*).

THIS little Warbler, which enlivens the woods in early spring with its pretty contribution to Nature's woodland choir, is one of the earliest summer visitors to our shores. It usually reaches us from Africa and Persia—its winter retreats—by the second week in April, although it is no rare occurrence for it to be noted in many districts during the latter end of March.

It is a most persistent songster, and seems to be greatly increasing in England. During April, May, June and July the whole woodland rings with the short but very pleasing little song. It is not long sustained, but is charming and beautifully musical. It strikes me as somewhat lonely, yet sweet and plaintive—in this respect reminding one of the Robin—and without doubt, its utterance is, as Mr Warde Fowler has said, unique among British birds.

Its habitat—like its very near relative the Chiff Chaff—is amongst the tree tops; here it is continually on the move, even whilst uttering its song, and it is worth noticing that whilst both the Chiff Chaff and the present species haunt the tops of tall trees, both nest upon or close to the ground.

It was only recently that I heard again the welcome

Willow Warbler

song of the Willow Warbler in a favourite belt of woodland. On the first typical warm spring day in April one is almost sure to hear the well-known notes once more, and how glad one is after the winter solitude to suddenly have fall upon the ear the voices of these feathered harbingers of summer. I have been particularly struck by the likeness of some Redbreasts' songs to that of



WILLOW WARBLER ($\frac{2}{5}$ Natural Size)

the present species, but I am not aware that this has been noticed by other ornithologists.

May and June is the breeding period, and the nest is placed at the bottom of a bush or on a grass-tangled bank. The structure is similar in shape to that of the Chiff Chaff—that is to say it is almost domed—and the materials consist of dry grass, with a lining of roots, horsehair and feathers.

The five to seven eggs are white, profusely speckled with light red.

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The food consists of insects.

It has many local names, and amongst those on my list are those of Grosbeak, Ground Huckmuck, Hay-bird, Oven Bird, Peggy Whitethroat, Scotch Wren, Strawsmeer, White Wren, Willie Muftie, Willow Wren, Yellow Warbler and Yellow Wren.

Bright olive-green above; above the eye is a narrow streak of yellow; yellowish-white underneath, palest towards the centre; yellow leg feathers.

Almost five inches in length.

CLXIII.—WARBLER, WOOD (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*).

THIS Warbler is a later visitor to us than either the Chiff Chaff or the Willow Wren, usually arriving towards the end of April or early May. It winters in Africa and Persia. Like the two preceding species, it haunts tall trees and in this respect has a marked liking for the stately beech and oak.

It also resembles the above-named birds in regard to the situation of the nest, which is placed on the ground, but the nest can be identified by the absence of feathers, which are never used by the present species.

It is dome-shaped and placed in the shelter afforded by a tuft of grass, heath or like herbage. Moss, leaves and hay are used, with a lining of fine grass and horsehair.

The five to seven eggs are white, profusely spotted and speckled with dark red-purple, mostly towards the larger end.

It is exclusively an insect-eater, and in this respect differs from many of its relatives which visit us during the summer months.

Its song has been described by Mr Hudson thus:—

“It may be said to possess two distinct songs. Of these, the most frequently-uttered and unmistakable begins with notes clear, sweet and distinct, but following more and more rapidly until they run together in a resonant trill, and finally in a long, tremulous note, somewhat thin and reedy in sound. At longer intervals it utters its other song or call, a loud, clear note, slightly modulated, and somewhat plaintive, repeated without variation, three or four times.”

Wheatear

The local names include: Green Wren, Larger Willow Wren, Largest Willow Wren, Large Yellow Wren, Willie Muftie, Wood Wren, Yellow Bird, Yellow Warbler, Yellow Willow Wren and Yellow Wren.

Has the reader ever noticed how birds are sometimes seen or heard under striking conditions? What I mean is, how birds are sometimes seen at their best. I recall a certain day in May when I chanced to see one of these birds on the summit of a small spruce fir, the sunlight resting right on its beautiful and striking plumage. Never before or since have I seen this species under such conditions, and the sight was one which will never be effaced from the memory.

Above, the plumage is olive-green with a tinge of sulphur-yellow; above the eye is a broad streak of the latter colour; bright yellow on sides of head and throat, and insertion of the wings and throat; remainder of under plumage, pure white.

Nearly six inches in length.

CLXIV.—WHEATEAR (*Saxicola oenanthe*).

THIS species is a summer visitor to our country, arriving from Western and Northern Africa to Persia and Northern India—its winter homes—towards the end of March, and is one of the earliest bird visitors from across the seas which one may look for in early spring.

It is a most restless bird, flitting from clod to clod, or stone to stone, uttering the whole time its curious monotonous-sounding alarm-note. For man it seems to have a positive dislike, and although I may be singularly unfortunate, I can never get a good glimpse of the restless creature, for he is ever on the move. In this respect it resembles the less gaudily-attired Whinchat, but this latter bird lends itself to much better observation than the species now under consideration.

Its song is soft and sweet, and is frequently uttered as the bird hovers over his mate, with the feathers expanded. The flight is of a very "dipping" character, and somewhat like that of the Greater Whitethroat.

When the Wheatears first arrive on our shores there is a great rush and then a lull for a few days, and on the

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Sussex Downs it is a sight to behold them in their fresh spring livery. They rest for a short while and then resume their journey, distributing themselves over a very wide range.

Nowadays, this truly handsome species is not nearly so numerous as in the past, when they were caught in large numbers for the table, and the reason is not far to seek, for the Wheatear loves solitude and wild, untenanted, desert places. It is because he is found on barren moorlands and the like that his song is so welcome; if he tenanted the woodland his contribution to the avine choir would probably be considered very mediocre. But in those lonely mountain solitudes and uncultivated places, the bird is very entertaining, both in regard to its sprightly habits and cheery little song. I remember when I was across the Scottish moorlands, how glad I was to watch and listen to this bird, for the only other musician of any note to be heard there, was the Meadow Pipit.

In appreciating bird life one has to take into consideration the surroundings which the various species inhabit; thus the Kingfisher beside the limpid stream is seen at his best, and would seem strangely out of place in the woodland; the Jay is at home in the copse but appears in a foreign element when observed in the open country, a remark which also applies to the Woodpeckers, the Nuthatch, the Tree Creeper, the Wryneck and other species too numerous to mention.

The nesting season is from April onwards. In the north the nest is placed on moors, and wilds of the mountains; in the south in crevices of walls, under stones or clods and similar situations. The nest is made up of dry grass, wool, bents, moss and hair.

The four to six eggs are pale greenish-blue, and are generally spotless.

The food consists of insects.

It has a number of local names, amongst them being Chack, Chack Bird, Chacker, Chickell, Chicker, Clodhopper, English Ortolan, Fallow Chat, Fallow Finch, Fallow Lunch, Fallow Smick, Fallow Snatch, Snorter, White Rump, Whitetail and Stone Chacker.

Bluish-grey above; black on wing and wing-coverts, centre and end of tail, bill, feet, eyes and ears; white at base and lower portion of side of tail, as also on chin,

Whimbrel

forehead and stripe over the eye, and under parts. During the autumn it is reddish-brown above and the tail-feathers have white tips. The female is ash-brown above, tinged with yellow, and the eye-stripe is of a dingy colour.

Six and a half inches in length.

CLXV.—WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*).

IN many respects this bird resembles the Curlew already described. Indeed, one at least of its local names bears out the truth of this statement, *i.e.*, Half Curlew, but when another of its curious localisations is given—Whimbrel-Curlew—it is time that we should cease from commenting upon, and drawing illustrations from, its local and old-fashioned names!

This species nests in the far north, the Orkney and Shetland Isles being, I believe, the only stations where it is found breeding.

To shortly state the difference in language and habits between this bird and the Curlew, the present species possesses a shriller note, is not nearly so wary or shy, flies more rapidly and does not resort so much as a feeding ground to sand flats and the like. It haunts the neighbourhood of the sea, tenanting low-lying meadow lands, pastures and grass-grown saltings.

In appearance the Whimbrel is smaller than the Curlew, being eighteen inches only in length, whereas the Curlew is from twenty-one to twenty-six inches; in each case the length of the female is given.

In the south this bird is only known as a spring and autumn visitor. At those seasons numbers may be heard or seen high in the air, flying rapidly either to their breeding grounds in the north or away from our Island towards their winter quarters.

To revert to the local names again, the bird is called the May Bird in some districts, owing to its punctuality in reaching certain localities regularly during the month of May. Some birds are, however, resident along our coast throughout the winter.

The nesting season is from towards the end of May to the end of June. A slight hollow in the ground is chosen as a nesting site, sheltered by a clump of herbage, in

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untenanted mountainous districts, usually not far from the sea. A few blades of grass and heather twigs serve for the "nest."

The four eggs are olive-brown, spotted with brown of a darker shade. The food consists of crabs, marine insects and worms during the winter, and in the summer similar and other eatables are procured from the saltings, pastures, etc., which it tenants.

The local names include those of Chequer Bird, Chickereel, Curlew Knot, Half-Calloo, Half Curlew, Jack Curlew, Knot Curlew, Long Whaap, Little Whaap, May Bird, Seven Whistler, Cowslip Bird, Tang Whaap, Titterel and Whimbrel Curlew.

Mr Hett gives the notes as under:—call, "curlee" (shrill); "titterel" (whistling repeated several times); and "tetty, tetty, tit."

It has a dark brown crown, with a broad pale streak down the centre; above, it is similar to the Curlew but darker; white axillaries barred with brown.

Length of female, eighteen inches.

CLXVI.—WHINCHAT (*Pratincola rubetra*).

THE Whinchat derived its name from its general, but not invariable, habit of frequenting furze or whin and uttering as it flits from bush to bush its well-known cry of "u-tick, u-tick." It is nearly always seen on or near the summit.

Although not nearly so gaudy and striking a bird as its near relative, the Wheatear, the male Whinchat in his best livery is a handsome fellow and utters a very charming little song, which, so far as I am aware, is quite distinct from that of any other British bird.

Furze commons and waste lands seem particularly suitable for its requirements, and it may be regarded as strange if, during the summer, the rambler finds himself where furze bushes abound which do not contain several pairs of this lively little bird. And, moreover, it cannot be very well overlooked, for it mounts time after time upon the topmost twigs of a bush, and there utters its cheery notes, seeming to court the attention of the listener.

If the song reminds me of any other British songster it

Whinchat

is that of the Goldfinch, although not in its entirety ; it is rather more subdued and assumes the form of a low, sweet warble. Some ornithologists have compared its vocal efforts to those of the Redstart, but the latter as a songster seems to the writer to be a particularly silent species, and it is rare that he has heard the Redstart uttering anything approaching a song.

Although extremely fond of furze commons, the Whinchat is not restricted to them, and it may be found tenanting both uncultivated and cultivated lands, waste ground, hills, meadows, and other places. It is fond, too, of frequenting a railway bank, and like a great many more of the smaller birds, takes a keen delight in perching on the telegraph wires.

In some respects, that is more particularly in regard to its capture of insects, it is Flycatcher-like, darting off its watch-tower after insects, or hawking for them around grasses close to the ground. It feeds on insects, small beetles, worms, grubs, etc., and is entirely a beneficial bird.

It is a summer visitor only, wintering in Northern Africa, reaching us from middle to end of April, and sometimes as late as May.

May and June is the nesting season ; the nest is placed on or close to the ground, and it is with difficulty that it is found unless the parent birds are carefully watched. Grass, coarse outside, finer inside, moss and straws are used, whilst occasionally small roots and horsehair are added.

The four to six eggs are greenish-blue in colour, less rounded at either end than those of the Hedge Sparrow, and are unspotted.

Amongst the local names are Ring Fowl, Bank Sparrow, Grasschat, Whin Bushchat and Furze Chat.

Above, it is dusky brown with reddish-yellow edgings ; over the eye is a broad stripe of white ; white on throat and neck sides ; bright yellowish-red on neck and breast ; on the wings and at base of tail is a large spot of white ; dusky-brown on tip of tail and two centre feathers ; yellowish-white belly and flanks.

The colours in the female are duller and the white spot on wing is smaller.

Five inches and a quarter in length.

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CLXVII.—WHITETHROAT, GREATER (*Sylvia cinerea*).

IN many districts this species is quite the commonest summer migrant, and is generally distributed in our country. It arrives from its winter retreat in Southern Africa about the middle to end of April, and it is no sooner amongst us than it commences to utter its pleasing little song.

This bird is a great favourite of mine, its interesting song-flights as the coquettish little feathered being flits along some sunlit hedgerow, or darts hither and thither in the air like some butterfly toying on the wing, cannot fail to attract the notice of the most casual Rambler. To me these curious song-flights are quite the most interesting habit in connection with it, and many a time I have enjoyed a hearty laugh at its exceedingly ludicrous antics in mid-air. At times, the wary bird seems as if suspended from a wire and dances upon the very air, uttering as an accompaniment its pleasing song. It is jerky in utterance, and is not nearly so sweet as that of the Black-cap, although in some respects it resembles the song of this bird; but to me the manner of utterance is more fascinating than the song itself. The male bird will fly in front of the Rambler by odd jerks and gesticulations for quite a distance, finally going back again as lively and frolicsome as when he started, and uttering the whole time its delicate warble, raising the feathers of the head, puffing out the throat, and becoming more excitable every moment.

It is not nearly so shy, nor so local, as a species as its relative the Lesser Whitethroat, and loves to frequent hedgerows or bushes. It is very fond of the wild rose bush or brambles as a nesting site, and also nettles—hence its local name of Nettle Creeper—thick clumps of herbage not far from the ground, and hedge-banks.

May to July is the nesting period, and young are sometimes found in the nest as late as August. The nest is a frail but neat structure, made up of fine grasses with a hair lining.

The five or six eggs vary—green or yellow in various shades is the general colour, blotched or spotted with ash-grey or brown.

Lesser Whitethroat

The food consists of small caterpillars, and a little fruit is also taken. For two or three summers my garden has been visited by some of these birds. They are usually very tame, but although I mostly see them on my rows of peas or beans, I cannot yet discover what in particular attracts them.

It has a host of local names, the chief of which are Common Whitethroat, Beardie, Charlie Miftie, Hay Chat, Jack-straw, Megg Cut-throat, Muffit, Muff, Muftie, Muggy, Nettle Creeper, Nettlemonger, Peggy Whitethroat, Whantie, Wheetie-why Bird, White-throated Warbler, and Hay Tit.

Mention must be made of the curious scolding-like note which is uttered, which reminds one of that of the Sedge Warbler, and also of the erratic, dipping flight.

It has an ash-grey head with a brown tinge; remainder of upper plumage reddish-brown; dusky wings, with red edging on coverts; white underneath, tinged faintly with rose colour; dark brown tail, white on the tips of the outer feathers and outer web, the next tipped only with white.

The female lacks the rosy tint on the breast.

Five and a half inches in length.

CLXVIII.—WHITETHROAT, LESSER

(*Sylvia curruca*).

THIS species differs in several particulars from its near relative, although it is not so much smaller as its name implies. It is an equally restless bird, but is much shyer and resorts more frequently to the tops of tall trees. Its song, too, is not nearly so attractive; indeed, as a song bird its praises cannot be very loudly applauded. It is a hurried little contribution to Nature's choir, consisting in the main of one or two notes only, but for all that, it is cheerful and pleasing. At times it reminds me of the start of the Tree Pipit's song, but just as the listener is preparing to hear it, the notes cease as abruptly as they begin, and the restless little Warbler has moved on in his almost unceasing search for minute caterpillars and aphides, upon which it feeds for the most part. Fruit is also partaken of.

It is not nearly so generally distributed as the Greater

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Whitethroat, hence is not so well-known, indeed, owing to its skulking and recluse habits is probably often overlooked.

It arrives on our shores from Africa—its winter home—about the middle of April, being a summer visitor only.

From May to July is the nesting period, and the situations chosen are almost identical to those of the bird last under consideration. The nest, too, is somewhat similar, but with the addition of grass, bents and stalks of other plants, combined together with the webs of spiders and lined with hair and roots.

The four or five eggs are white, speckled, mostly at the larger end, with ash or light brown.

Amongst the local names are those of Babillard, Brake Nightingale, Hay-jack, Jack-straw and White-breasted Warbler.

Smoky-grey on head, neck and back; almost black on ear-coverts; brown on wings with grey edges; dusky tail, outer feathers as in the Greater species, the two following, with white tips; almost pure white on lower parts; lead-colour feet.

Five and a quarter inches in length.

CLXIX.—WIGEON (*Mareca penelope*).

THIS handsome bird, as a nesting species, is best known in the north of our island home, as it breeds in Scotland and the Isles of Orkney and Shetland. It has also been known to nest in Ireland, but not to any extent.

During the winter we are visited by immigrants from the Continent, and in the autumn many of these birds may be observed along the coast making their way southward for the winter and returning again the following spring. It frequents, as well as the coast, inland waters and swamps.

It appears to be a very docile and social species, and will readily associate with other Ducks which choose similar surroundings for nesting purposes.

It is swift and powerful when on the wing, and a good swimmer. It may be observed on land a good deal, walking along the banks of the waters which it frequents.

Sportsmen tell us that the Wigeon is a shy and wary bird, and is stalked most successfully by being approached "up wind."

Woodcock

The note is a loud, prolonged whistle, wild and weird. It is called in some localities the "Whew Duck" because of its whistling cry. Charles Dixon has described it as "a wild and loud mee-ow or nee-ow," whilst Mr Hett gives it as :—Call, "whew-whew-whew." Male, "pipe" (shrill when alone, soft and little repeated when in company). Female, "purre" (loud and long when alone); "whistle" (shrill).

May is the nesting season and the situation chosen is a heather tuft or a bunch of rushes near water, lakes especially. Dead aquatic herbage is used in the construction of the nest, lined with sooty-brown down with white tips plucked from the body of the parent bird. The five to eight or nine eggs are rich cream white, 2·50 by 1·50 in. The female covers the eggs when leaving the nest.

The food consists of leaves, grass, shoots, insects, shrimps, molluscs, etc.

Among the local names are those of Bald Pate, Easterling, Pandled Whew, Pundle, Whew Duck, Whewer, Whim and Common Wigeon.

Although it frequents inland waters it mostly resorts to the neighbourhood of the sea; it feeds both by day and night, and on land as well as in the water.

Dull blue bill; cream-white forehead and crown; chestnut chin, neck and throat; cheeks and hind neck spotted minutely with dark green; white breast; grey underneath, dark grey pencil markings on flanks; vermiculated grey mantle; white shoulder, with a terminal bar of black, followed by a green speculum tipped with black underneath; dark brown on wing and tail-feathers; same colour on legs and feet.

Eighteen inches in length.

The female is mottled with greyish-brown above; whitish on shoulder; greyish-green speculum; underneath, mottled buffish-white. In July the male bird assumes the plumage of the female, after the manner of the Wild Duck.

CLXX.—WOODCOCK (*Scolopax rusticula*).

THIS bird, so beloved by the sportsman, is the largest British representative of the Snipe family. In the British Isles it is best known as a spring and autumn visitor, but it nests regularly, although sparingly, in our country.

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During the autumn large numbers of these birds reach our shores from Northern Europe, but, so far as is known, very few of these (if any) remain to breed the following summer; yet it is still a doubtful point amongst ornithologists, I believe, whether those pairs which do nest with us are resident birds, although Charles Dixon, amongst others, emphatically states his opinion that such is the case.

It is nocturnal in its habits, and is rarely lighted upon during the day-time. Its many-shaded dress of sober brown admirably protects it from view and supplies an excellent illustration of colour-protection in bird life. Often it is observed simply by its glaring eyes, and the poet Butler knew his subject when he wrote:—

“For fools are known by looking wise,
As men find Woodcocks by their eyes.”

It seems to be a veritable lover of wandering, and some observers have credited it also with a keen love for solitude and unsociability. At night it will wander forth on its prowls for food quite alone, but not invariably, as other observers have noticed several birds searching for food together.

Perhaps one of the most interesting points in regard to the Woodcock is the wonderful sensitive beak which it possesses. It is stated that a bunch of nerves situated at the extremity of the bill enables the bird to feel worms and insects when it is probing for the same underground. Mr Hudson writes thus on this interesting question:—

“It obtains its food by probing deep in the soft, damp soil, or in bogs, with its long bill, but how it finds the earthworms and grubs on which it feeds it would be hard to say. There is no doubt that the end of the beak is an exquisitely delicate organ of touch, but it is hard to believe that it is thrust deep into the soil merely on the chance of finding something edible.”

Yet another interesting trait in the character of this bird is its habit of carrying its young when in danger by flying away with them. Many opinions have been forthcoming from time to time as to the exact position in which the young are held, but it is now definitely agreed that the parent carries its young whilst flying by the aid of her feet, “either grasping them in her claws or holding them

Woodlark

pressed between her thighs. According to some observers, the bird uses her bill to keep her young one pressed firmly against her thighs when flying with it."

The favourite haunts are young plantations and spinneys where there is a thick undergrowth, and it will also resort to woods where good cover abounds. When flushed, it darts off in a most bewildering manner, and it often astonishes sportsmen as to the way in which it evades rushing into trees and bushes with which it seems almost certain it must come into contact.

It is mostly a shy, recluse species, but at pairing time the bird throws off its timidity to a great extent, and during the early morning and at evening his curious love antics, as the male bird flies slowly but continuously to and fro, with puffed out feathers, are strikingly contrasted against his skulking habits during the remainder of the year.

It breeds from March to May and places its meagre nest of dead grass and leaves and bracken on a sloping bank under trees in a slight depression, or in a secluded corner of a wood or spinney, the eggs being very exposed. Near the foot of a tree is a very favourite nesting site.

The eggs are four in number and are not nearly so V-shaped as those of many birds of a similar character. They are dirty yellowish-white, well blotched and spotted with two or three shades of pale brown and purplish-grey.

It utters, during flight, two peculiar notes, one deep and hollow, the other sharp and whistling, called in East Anglia, "roding."

I am unacquainted with any local names which have been bestowed upon this bird, but it is interesting to notice that the Short-eared Owl is called in some districts the Woodcock Owl, owing to the fact that it frequently makes its appearance about the same time as the Woodcock.

It is reddish-brown above, barred and vermiculated with black; wood-brown underneath with darker bars of brown.

Fourteen inches in length. The sexes are similar.

CLXXI.—WOODLARK (*Alauda arborea*).

THIS species is not nearly so generally distributed in our country as its far better-known relative, the Skylark.

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Many country people, and practical field ornithologists too, do not seem to be at all well acquainted either with the bird or its life and habits, but this is to be attributed to its extremely local distribution. Doubtless when seen, it is frequently mistaken for either the Skylark or the Tree Pipit, for the reasons that its song resembles the former, and it rises in the air somewhat similarly, but in circles, and it will also sing Tree-Pipit-like whilst perched on trees and will ascend from same after the manner of that well-known summer visitor.

It is a resident bird and may often be heard in song during the autumn and winter, in the same way as its more distinguished relative.

It frequents woods, parks and commons, or rather, in the vicinity of the same. It loves to select a haunt where trees and hedgerows abound, and will be found frequenting the same spot all through the summer.

It seems strange that so good a songster—it is much sought after as a cage bird—should be so little known, for its singing powers rank very high, and some observers state that it must assuredly be placed amongst the first half-dozen best songsters we possess. The notes are very sweet, but the song is somewhat less hilarious than that of the Skylark. It will in a like manner frequently continue its strains for an hour without intermission, the bird describing all the time a series of widely-extended circles. It will sing far into the summer night, and it is stated that “to hear him on a wild and lonely hillside, with perhaps no other accompaniment than the tinkle of a distant sheep-bell, is an experience not readily to be forgotten.” Although the song is sweeter than that of the Skylark, it is not of such a powerful character, and the soaring height is not so great as in the latter bird. The Woodlark ascends in circles, whereas its relative partakes of a sort of vertical flight, first to left and then to right, but invariably upward. Mr Hudson states that “of the two, he (the Woodlark) is the more constant singer.” However this may be, I put on record my own humble observation that the Skylark sings almost eleven months out of the twelve, and if any other British bird possesses a longer period of song than this, then the Skylark has been fairly beaten.

The call-note is a musical double one, very similar to that of the Skylark.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

To look at this bird one might imagine that he has before him a small-sized Skylark, the tail being shorter in comparison to the size of its body, and at a casual glance there is no apparent difference in the plumage, but on close investigation it will be seen that the breast of the Woodlark and the pale streak over the eye are more prominent.

It nests from March onwards, placing its nest on the ground—sometimes under the shelter of a bush or tuft of grass—which is made up of bents and grasses, and occasionally moss outside and hair inside as a lining.

The four or five eggs are white or buffish in ground colour, sometimes with a greenish-white tinge, spotted and freckled with reddish-brown, a zone sometimes at the larger end.

The food is similar to that of the Skylark, and as regards local names it seems that almost as few have been bestowed upon this species as upon the Skylark, and the only ones known to me are those of Lark and Woodwell.

It is reddish-brown above, the middle of each feather dark brown; over the eye is a prominent streak of yellowish-white, which extends to the back part of the head; yellowish-white underneath, streaked with dark brown. The tail is very short.

Six and a half inches in length.

CLXXII.—WOODPECKER, GREAT SPOTTED (*Dendrocopus major*).

THIS species is neither so well-known nor so common as the Green Woodpecker, nor is it so loquacious.

It is fairly well distributed in England, but is rare in Scotland, and does not nest in Ireland.

It resorts mostly to the tops of trees, and being a very silent species is probably often overlooked.

It nests from towards the end of May to June, placing its eggs in the hole of a tree, but it is deeper than that of the Green species, and it does not invariably make the hole, taking advantage of a hole in a decayed or decaying branch. No nesting materials are used excepting the chips which accumulate whilst the boring is in progress.

The four or five eggs are white, and measure 1.05 by .75 inches.

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The food consists for the most part of insects, but fruit, seeds, acorns, berries and nuts are also eaten.

The call is a sharp, quick note, repeated twice or thrice, but for the most part the bird is very silent.

It has many local and old-fashioned names, and amongst those on my list are French Pie, French Woodpecker, Great Black and White Woodpecker, Middle-spotted Woodpecker, Pied Woodpecker, Spickle-pied Woodpecker, Whittall, White Woodpecker, Whitt-wall, Witall or Witt-wall, Woodall, Woodnacker and Wood Pie.

It is black on the crown and upper parts ; on the back of the head there is a patch of crimson ; white scapulars, lesser wing-coverts and underneath ; crimson on belly and under tail-coverts. The female lacks the crimson on the head.

Nine and a half inches in length.

CLXXIII.—WOODPECKER, GREEN (*Gecinus viridis*).

THIS beautiful British bird is, it is pleasant to state, fairly plentiful in many parts of England, but in the north of our island it becomes rarer, and, like the last-mentioned species, does not nest in Ireland.

A ramble through our English woodland during the springtime would lose much of its charm were it not for the peculiar, joyous and wild laughing note of this very handsome bird.

It is much more often heard than seen, either uttering its laughter-like notes or hammering away with amazing dexterity at some hole it is hewing out as a nesting site, or tapping the bark in its active search for insects and their larvæ.

It is a most engaging, restless species, always seeming at work, and is rarely lighted upon in the open. When thus disturbed it flies somewhat awkwardly and makes for the nearest tree, up which it can scamper to seclusion, and it is really wonderful how difficult it is to locate the wary bird with the naked eye, when upon the trunk or branch of a tree, so perfectly does its greenish plumage harmonise with the surroundings.

To have the good fortune to stealthily come upon the bird unawares and watch it at its work is a sight indeed !

Green Woodpecker

The bird clings to the trunk or branch with its strong feet, brings its tail-feathers upon the same as a further means of support, and hammers away with amazing rapidity with its long, straight, sharp and powerful bill, and in a very short time has hewn out a hole in the tree for nesting purposes, or, if he is not thus engaged, he is hammering at the bark for insects and their larvæ. When it is remembered, too, that this latter task has to be performed practically every day of its busy and energetic life, it is really marvellous to reflect for a moment upon this bird's powers of endurance, its pluck, intelligence, patience, perseverance and tenacity! It is a captivating sight to watch it dealing out well-directed blows from its powerful bill—it throws its head backwards and forwards rapidly to give greater power to its strokes—and thrusting its long and barbed tongue into the crevices of the bark after the lurking insects.

Perhaps, however, it is for his laughter-like language that this bird is most appreciated, and amongst the tumult of woodland sounds to be heard during spring and early summer, it is no difficult matter to single out the curious and distinct notes of this Woodpecker. To those unacquainted with the nature of its vocal efforts the same is best described as a regular laughter-like utterance, and those hearing the notes for the first time might certainly evince incredulity as to whether it really was a bird which was responsible for so human-like and weird an utterance. Nature lovers know and appreciate the truly rural sound, and listen for it anxiously as spring draws near. I do hear the note uttered in the summer occasionally, and now and then during the autumn and winter, but it is mostly during the spring, when its fancies lightly turn to thoughts of love, that it is to be heard most frequently.

The food is similar to that set out in the sketch of the last species, but the Green Woodpecker also visits ant-hills and makes a raid upon the industrious inhabitants thereof.

The hole hewn out for nesting purposes is made in the heart of the trunk or branch, and then proceeds downwards to the depth of about twelve inches. Soft-wooded trees are mostly resorted to—Scotch firs are, according to my experience, mostly chosen—but an apparently sound

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tree, as viewed from the outside, is frequently found to be rotten when carefully and minutely examined.

It nests from the latter end of April to May, and the few chips which collect during nesting operations serve as the "nest."

The four to seven glossy white eggs measure 1.3 by .92 inches.

It has a host of local names, and I may mention those of Awl, Awl Bird, Eequal, Ecle, French Pie, Gally, Hew-hole, High Hoe, Pick-a-tree, Poppinjay, Rain Bird, Rain Fowl, Tongue Bird, Whet-ile, Whittle, Woodspite, Wood-wall, Yaffer, Yaffingale, Yaffle, Yaffler, Yappingale and Large Green Woodpecker.

It is thought by some country people that when this bird utters its notes it foretells rain or unsettled weather, but although this may sometimes be the case, it certainly is more often than not proved to be merely old country lore.

Olive green above; yellow rump; greenish-grey underneath; crimson crown, back of head and moustaches; black face.

The female has less crimson on the head and has black moustaches.

Thirteen inches long.

CLXXIV.—WOODPECKER, LESSER SPOTTED (*Dendrocopus minor*).

THIS dapper little Woodpecker is, I believe I am correct in stating, even less common than the Great Spotted species. It frequents most English counties, but in Ireland and Scotland becomes extremely rare.

It haunts the tops of tall trees in a similar manner to the first bird on our list, and owing to this fact is probably often overlooked.

On a recent April morning I had, what I consider to be, quite a unique experience with regard to the British Woodpeckers, having the pleasure of observing all three species in a very restricted district, and within an hour or two. This, too, barely twenty miles from London!

The life and habits of this small Woodpecker have already been incorporated in our notes on the two

Common Wren

other members of this interesting family of Aves; the nesting period, the situations chosen as a nesting site, the materials used (if any), and the food, are all identical with the last-mentioned species.

The eggs number four or five and are white, measuring .76 by .58 inches.

The note consists of a sharp chirp, and a curious sound is produced by the bird tapping at the bark on trees, a remark which also applies to the Great Spotted species; whilst its love-notes also resemble those of that bird.

Mr Hudson names this species the Barred Woodpecker as being preferable to Spotted; it is certainly barred and not spotted, and although Yarrell himself wrote that it was a regrettable fact that the shorter name was not more used, he did not apparently feel justified in calling the bird by the shorter and more correct name.

Besides this name it possesses several others, amongst which may be mentioned those of Crank Bird, French Magpie, Hickwall, Least Spotted Woodpecker, Little Black and White Woodpecker, Little French Woodpecker, Pumpborer and Wall Hick.

It is dirty white on the forehead and lower parts; has a bright red crown; black nape, back and wings barred with white; black tail, with white tips and black bars on the outer feathers; red iris.

Five and a half inches in length.

CLXXV.—WREN, COMMON (*Troglodytes parvulus*).

THIS well-known bird of the country-side, as familiar to most of us perhaps as the Sparrow, Rook, Starling or Robin, is one of my feathered favourites. It possesses such a business-like appearance whenever it is lighted upon; always seeming active and engaging, never idle; either creeping through the hedgerows or thicket with deft movements which strikingly remind one of a mouse rather than a bird, or pouring out with immense seriousness its brilliant little contribution to Nature's choir.

Shakespeare says that if the Nightingale sang by day instead of at night, when all the birds are warbling, it would be considered no better a musician than the Wren, but this I take to be a serious slight upon the bright little songster now receiving our attention. That the Nightin-

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gale does sing by day as well as at night is well known to all careful and observant students of wild-bird life, but what more concerns us is to point out how far the Bard of Avon (oh! shade of Bacon) was wrong in insinuating that the Wren was a poor songster! In my opinion the song of this bird is one of the sweetest, brightest and most successful vocal efforts of any of our British song-birds. Its song is never uttered continuously or for any lengthened period, but it is those spasmodic little outbursts of melody as the dapper little creature appears before us suddenly, coming from apparently nowhere and as if let down through the tree tops or hedgerow by a suspended wire manœuvred by an unseen hand, which strike upon the ear so pleasantly and for which we admire it. It will start singing suddenly when least expected; it matters not what the season may be; spring, summer, autumn and winter are all alike as regards its utterance of song, and when it starts, it seems as if its whole life depends upon a full blast of cheery music! It is its manner of utterance, almost as much as the song itself, which pleases.

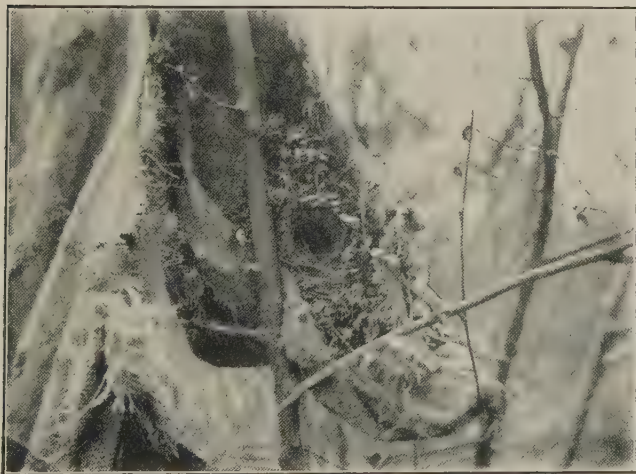
In many respects the song often reminds me of that of the Tree Pipit, although one misses the captivating song-flights of the latter bird, and it is remarkable that so strong and loud a song emanates from such a wee feathered being. Its lyrics are abrupt, high-pitched, clear and well-defined, a song quite distinct from that of any other British songster with which I am acquainted. Looked at through a field-glass, one may notice its little throat puffed out; its short cocked-up tail and perky actions; listen for a moment or two to its charming trills poured out in a rapid, continuous manner, and then the wee creature goes off in a fairy-like flight to take up its station a little farther off, only to make the woodland ring again with clear and loud notes.

The Wren appears to hate being watched; he seems to have a distinct hatred for man, and I have noticed with surprise that during the keenest frost or hard weather my garden is rarely visited by this cheery little bird. He seems determined to be under no obligation to mankind; living alone, conspicuously independent and quite able to look after his own affairs.

It will start nesting operations as early as March, and the situations chosen are many. Thus, crevices of rocks,

Common Wren

posts, hedges, bushes, palings, out-houses, ivy bowers, or banks are chosen, and Mr Kearton mentions an instance of a pair which built inside the skeleton of a Hooded Crow ! The nest itself is a beautiful example of avine architecture, being domed with a small hole near the top. Moss, dead leaves and lichens, with a lining of fine moss, hair and a profusion of feathers are used, but the outside of the nest is frequently composed of materials which harmonise with the situation in which it is placed ; for example, when



NEST OF COMMON WREN BUILT IN A SACK.

placed in a hay stack, hay is used ; when built near bracken or dead leaves, either of the latter are used, and instances might be multiplied as to this colour protection. Many nests seem to be built and unoccupied, excepting perchance for roosting purposes ; certain is it that I find many nests which never contain any eggs. It may be that the bird is so active and engaging, and so particular as to its homestead, that several nests are constructed to fully occupy its attention, or until such a homestead has been established as pleases the fastidious taste of this interesting feathered being, although some observers state that these nests are made solely by the male bird.

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The eggs number from six to nine or ten, and I have found as many as thirteen. These are white and large for so small a bird, sparingly spotted with light red.

The food consists of small spiders, woodlice, earwigs, chrysalids and the like; it is also stated to partake of fruit and seeds, but for the most part is entirely insectivorous.

As is only to be expected, so general a favourite and so well known a bird has a host of local and provincial names, and I may enumerate those of Jenny Wren, Birritie, Chitty Wren, Cutty Wren, Jilliver Wren, Jimpo, Katy Wren, Kitty Wren, Ran, Tidley Wren, Tidley Creeper, Titty Wren, Brown Wren, Tomtit, Tope and Vraun.

Above, it is reddish-brown with transverse dusky bars; quills alternately barred with black and reddish-brown; dusky tail with black bars; a pale narrow streak over the eye; reddish-brown underneath; dark streaks on flanks and thighs.

Three inches and a half in length.

I may here mention that the Wren found on the Isle of St Kilda is acknowledged by many ornithologists to be specifically distinct from the bird found on the mainland, described above. It is known as the St Kilda Wren (*Troglodytes hirtensis*). It appears to differ in its song, which is louder and more powerful; is by no means shy; the eggs are larger and more heavily marked than those of the Common species; the bird itself is larger, more distinctly barred on the upper parts, and has much stouter feet.

CLXXVI.—WREN, GOLDEN CRESTED (*Regulus cristatus*).

THIS species, the last but one on our list of British breeding birds, is not only the smallest bird in our country, but is also the most diminutive bird in Europe.

It seems strange that such a small bird should be able to exist through a severe winter, but it is nevertheless true that when the country-side has been frost-bound and snow has lain on the ground for some considerable time, I have frequently observed these engaging little birds in the tops of the fir trees searching as assiduously as ever for insects, etc., and uttering the while their cheery little notes! It

Golden Crested Wren

is with difficulty that one can follow them in their restless movements, and so sharp and quick are they, that it is rare one is able to observe them snatching hither and thither for some small insect. Cold does not apparently affect birds so much as hunger, but it is extraordinary, when one reflects for a moment upon the minuteness of this bird, that it can manage to eke out an existence during very severe winters.

Just recently I was listening with intense pleasure to one of these birds singing his pretty little song, and during the whole time the notes were uttered, the industrious Gold-crest was searching for insects amidst the pliant branches of a spruce fir tree. Wherever these latter trees and yews abound, there one may expect to find this interesting species; not only does it frequent these trees for the purposes of seclusion and food, but it also resorts to them very considerably as a nesting site. Underneath the pliant branch its exquisite little homestead may often be found, consisting of leaves, moss, fine grass, spiders' webs and lichens, all bound very cleverly together, with a lining of feathers.

It nests from April to June, and the six to ten eggs are pale yellowish-white with a zone at the larger end of dull light reddish-brown.

It is entirely insectivorous, is indigenous, and well distributed throughout the United Kingdom.

It is not often lighted upon in the open, keeping for the most part to woods, plantations and gardens. When it does shift its quarters—and all our British birds are more or less partially migratory—it moves about in large companies. Should there be any wind prevalent it naturally experiences some difficulty in flight, being so light and small, and I have picked up specimens which have been dashed to pieces against walls, houses, etc., during a gale of wind.

Among the local names may be mentioned those of Bee Bird, Golden-crested Kinglet, Golden-crested Regulus, Golden-crested Warbler, Herring-spink, Kinglet, Whiskey, Woodcock Pilot, and Wood Titmouse.

Above, it is olive with a yellow tinge; ash-coloured cheeks; greyish-brown wing with two transverse bands of white; bright yellow crest in front, orange behind, bounded by two black lines; yellowish-grey underneath.

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The colours in the female are not so bright and the crest is lemon-colour.

Three and a half inches in length.

CLXXVII.—WRYNECK (*Iynx torquilla*).

ALTHOUGH the last bird on our list, the Wryneck is by no means the least interesting.

It is a summer visitor only to this country, arriving from China and Northern Africa—where it spends the winter—during the first fortnight in April, generally just preceding the Cuckoo, hence the reason for some of its local names.

This species does not lend itself to close observation; its plumage harmonises very beautifully with the trees it frequents, and at a little distance away it is with difficulty that the bird can be located. Beyond this, it is a very restless bird, resembling its near relatives the Woodpeckers, and some of its habits also remind one of the Nuthatch and the Tree Creeper.

It is a bird of the woodland, and the spring ramble would lose much of its charm without the curious and distinct note so well-known to dwellers in the country. It is a high-pitched, clear note, may be heard a great distance away, and is repeated many times. When disturbed—especially when the nesting season is in full swing—or when taken in the hand, the Wryneck hisses after the manner of a snake rather than a bird, hence its local name of Snake-bird. Beyond this, when on a tree engaged in dexterously searching for insects, etc., it twists its head from side to side in a most peculiar manner, which has resulted in the name of Wryneck being bestowed upon it.

It is not well distributed in the British Isles; it does not nest in Scotland, is unknown in Ireland, is most common in the southern and south-eastern counties, and becomes rare in the west and in Wales.

Although closely allied to the Woodpeckers, it does not possess the habit of hammering with the beak into trees, neither are its tail-feathers—which are soft—of much support to it.

One of the chief characteristics of this extremely interest-

Wryneck

ing summer visitor to our Island is its long retractile tongue, with the aid of which it is able to secure insects and the like, the same being coated with saliva of an adhesive nature, materially aiding it in this respect.

When engaged in these operations it thrusts its tongue in and out with amazing rapidity, and the observer, having the good fortune to come across the bird thus occupied, would no doubt, on first acquaintance with the same, be considerably puzzled as to what the bird was really doing.

It feeds on caterpillars and insects, is very fond of small ants and their eggs, and is also stated to be partial to the berries of the elder.

It nests in May and June, placing its eggs in holes of trees already made; these are not excavated by the bird itself. The nesting materials consist only of chips of decayed wood; the eggs number from six to eight, sometimes more; they are glossy white, oval in shape, and about the same size as those of the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

Amongst the local and old-fashioned names—many of which are not at all inaptly applied—are those of Cuckoo's Mate, Maid and Messenger, Emmet Hunter, Long Tongue, Pay-pay, Rinding Bird, Snake Bird, Tongue Bird, Turkey Bird, Dinnick, and Willow Bite.

Above, it is reddish-grey, with irregular brown and black spots and lines; from the back of the head to the back is a broad band of black and brown; dull white underneath, with a buff tinge, and dark brown bars with the exception of on the breast and belly, where arrow-headed markings are found; on the outer web of the quills there are rectangular, alternate black and yellowish-red spots; tail-feathers barred with black and zigzag bands; olive-brown beak and feet.

Seven inches in length.

Here the sketches of the 177 species of birds which regularly breed in the British Isles at the present day draw to a close.

It is hoped that what has been written may prove to be useful and interesting to lovers of our wild birds, and particularly that the stress laid upon *the good birds do*, and

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the protection and preservation they need, may impress upon the reader the duty each one possesses of rendering all possible assistance to the efforts which are being made on behalf of our feathered friends.

Speaking generally, there are very few species which do more harm than good, and after all, it may be that those species which do seem to be more hurtful than otherwise are beneficial in keeping in check Nature's balance, and indirectly of economic value to man.

For the good most birds do, for their cheery voices and winning ways, their charming forms and delicate colouring, their beautifully woven nests and exquisite eggs, their fairy-like flight and other interesting characteristics, I appeal to my readers to study them with a bloodless intention, and to endeavour to learn practical lessons from their industry and devotion to their young; to study them as animate beings, and not as gazed upon as wretched caricatures of bird life too often found in museums and collections, and to endeavour to be of some service in specially inculcating and fostering within young and growing children an intelligent love for the bird life of our country.

THE END

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